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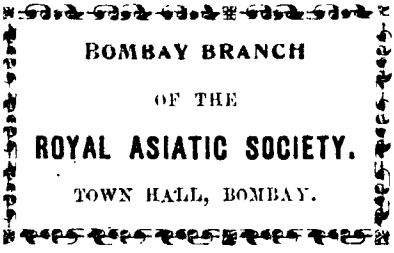

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THE HOMES AND HAUNTS

OF THE

ITALIAN POETS.

THE

HOMES AND HAUNTS

OF THE

ITALIAN POETS.

BY

FRANCES ELEANOR TROLLOPE

AND

T. ADOLPHUS TROLLOPE.

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THE HOMES AND HAUNTS
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BERNI.

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ITALIAN POETS.

BERNI.

FRANCESCO BERNI was born towards the end of the fifteenth century. The utmost endeavours of his biographers have failed to fix the date more precisely. He went to Rome when he was nineteen, and there immediately became attached to the service of the Cardinal di Bibbiena. This happened towards the latter years of the Cardinal's life; and he died in 1520. Some few years before 1520, therefore, Berni was nineteen; but there is nothing to show how many years these few may have been. There are reasons for believing that they could not have been many; and we shall probably not be far wrong if we suppose

the poet to have been born about 1498, and to have gone up to Rome about 1517.

Ariosto, who in respect to choice of theme and the outward form of his verse, though not in mode of treatment, may be considered to belong to the same school as Berni, and a whole host of other poets and poetasters of that century, was by very far the greatest and noblest of the group. And though we have to come down only from 1474, the date of the poet of Ferrara, to 1498—some twenty-four years—to meet with the birth of Berni, we have to make a very much greater descent not only from the one poet to the other, but from the one man to the other. Nevertheless, the immense popularity which Berni enjoyed among his contemporaries and the generation which succeeded them, and the fact that he has always been recognised by his countrymen, and by literary historians and critics, as the head and chief of a school of poetry which for many generations held its ground and contributed to the formation of the national taste and character so markedly that that style of composition has always been, and is still, known as Bernesque, are reasons sufficient to necessitate the admission of his name to our roll of Italian poets.

The leading idea which prompted Berni, and his followers and imitators, was much the same as that which inspired a much greater man, nearly a hundred years later, in a neighbouring country, Michael Cervantes, who was born in 1547. Of course the scope and purposes of the Spanish satirist were very much larger and more important in the history of the national literature and character than those of the Italian. But as the Spaniard was led by the monstrosities of the old romances of chivalry to extinguish them by the satire of his immortal work, so the Italian was moved by the absurdities and impossible adventures of the singers of the exploits of the Paladins of Charlemagne and the Knights of Arthur's Round Table to turn their narratives into ridicule by the burlesque treatment of a similar subject.

For this purpose he chose the "Orlando Innamorato," a poem which had been left unfinished and imperfect by Matteo Boiardo, and re-wrote it after his own manner. He wrote besides twenty-seven "Capitoli," or short pieces of verse, mostly of a burlesque character, and many of them on ridiculous subjects, the titles of some of which remind us of the "Praise of the Gout," of "Folly," and the like, which came into fashion among the learned triflers of a

somewhat later day among ourselves. Berni has left us "Capitoli" in "Praise of Eels," "Of Peaches," "Of Tom Culls,"* "Of Thistles," and others not equally mentionable to ears polite. We have also some thirty sonnets, and a few other short miscellaneous pieces. He takes his place on the Italian Parnassus wholly by virtue of the "Orlando Innamorato."

A variety of notices of himself and his fortunes are to be found scattered in various places of his works, more especially in the "Orlando." And from these the following particulars are in great part taken.

He was born at a village called Lamporecchio, situated in that district of Tuscany called the Val di Nievole. The name is given to all that fertile plain which lies between the Monte Albano and the little town of Pescia. The traveller from Florence to Lucca has it on his left hand as he passes at the foot of the hills after leaving Pistoia behind him. The region is an exceptionally smiling and fertile one, and is known as the Garden of Tuscany. The village of Lamporecchio, with its old castle, stands on the very edge of this plain, at the foot of the Monte Albano. How he came to be born there we are not

* As far as I can find, the little fresh-water fish so called is what is meant by *ghiozzo*.

told. His father was of Bibbiena. He was, says Berni, speaking of himself in the "Orlando,"* "a certain jolly companion of Florence. A Florentine he was, and of noble family, although his father was born and brought up in the Casentino, where *his* father having lived a long time acquired citizenship in a sort of a way, and took to himself a wife, and made a home in Bibbiena, which is a very pleasant place overlooking the Arno."

A very pleasant place is the little ancient town of Bibbiena; and though it is not clear whether Berni ever was there, his connection with the place, as set forth in the above-cited stanza of the "Orlando," was a circumstance of decisive importance in his life. For that pleasant place, overlooking the Arno as it does from its perch on a jutting knoll of the last slope of the Apennine, was the birthplace of the celebrated Bernardo Dovizi, better known as the Cardinal di Bibbiena.

Bernardo Dovizi had been born a poor lad in remote little Bibbiena, and was in some way or other, the exact particulars of which have perished, connected by relationship with the Berni family. Possibly this

* Canto lxvii. stanza 36.

may have been the motive which induced the poet's father to fix himself there. The young Dovizi had often gazed wistfully from Bibbiena's piazza over the low terrace parapet wall, across the sweet Casentino woods and streams, away to the spur of the Apennine, which shut in him and his native valley from the lower Valdarno, from Florence, and from fortune. But an elder brother of the Dovizi had succeeded in crossing that wistfully-gazed-at hill, beyond which lay for the young Bernardo the realisation of all sorts of golden dreams; and had achieved the far greater success of hitching himself on in some capacity to the mighty house of Medici. Given such a chance, needful allowance of brains, and sufficiently elastic notions of right and wrong, what might not be asked and expected from Fortune! The elder Dovizi, Scotchman-like and Tuscan-like, was not forgetful of the poor family left at home in upland little hungry Bibbiena, but seizing fitting occasion by the forelock, with wistful reverence and cap in hand, confides to the "Magnificent" Lorenzo, that he has a brother at home in the Casentino, who was dying of ambition to become, he also, a devoted servant of the good and gracious Medici!—a likely lad, who, the brother was sure, would do credit to his recommendation. "So! so! To be sure! Why not! Let him come! There's

our son, His Eminence, the Cardinal,* who will be fourteen next birthday. Your brother is nineteen you say. Well! let him come and serve our boy-Cardinal." So Bernardo came, and at once made himself acceptable to the pleasure-loving but also study-loving young Cardinal." The two lads studied together, went together to Rome, went together into exile when the bad days came with the invasion of French Charles VIII.; and together emerged into the sun of prosperity and Rome, when the second Julius sat in Peter's seat. The young satellite of the house of Medici found the means of making himself agreeable and useful to Julius; and, when Julius died, was of no small assistance in helping his patron to climb into the vacant chair. And no sooner had he done so than he forthwith pulled his ladder up after him, making Bernardo Dovizi a cardinal in his turn. And he, thus become a dispenser instead of a seeker of Fortune's favour, is, in his turn, not forgetful of old times, of Tuscan connections, and of the little hill-town overlooking the Arno and the pleasant Casentino; but draws up his relative young Berni after him to Rome, the great centre of ambitions and talents, the goal of each clever adventurer's hopes!

* He who in 1513 became Leo X.

But this is anticipating. Bernardo Dovizi received the purple from Leo X. in 1513. But it must have been probably some four or five years later that Francesco Berni was called by him to Rome. How soon the boy found the means of accomplishing that first stage on the road to fortune, which took him from Lamporecchi to Florence, there is nothing to show. Nor have we any information as to his life during this his first sojourn in the Tuscan capital. "He was then," says he himself in the following lines of the same stanza of the "Orlando" in which he tells us of his birthplace, "carried to Florence, where he lay a poor devil till he was nineteen years of age."

It is certain, however, that during these years he must have received from the care of some person the elements of as good an education as the time and place could afford him. Not only must he have attained such a degree of scholarship as fitted him, more or less, for receiving Orders—the absolutely essential preliminary necessity for one who hoped to ope the world his oyster in those days otherwise than by the sword—a degree of proficiency which need not be estimated very highly—but he did unquestionably become a very well-read Latin scholar, and (though some of his verses, especially his pentameters, are such as a fourth-form boy in my day would have been

scourged for), a not altogether contemptible Latin versifier, as some of his extant Latin poems show.

These two verses of the "Orlando Innamorato"—

> Poi fu condotto in Fiorenza, ove giacque
> Fin a diciannove anni poveretto !—

of which the substance has already been given, contain the whole of Berni's autobiographical notices of the first nineteen years of his life. And we have no other source of information from which to supplement them. We must therefore picture him to ourselves a lad of nineteen, probably already in deacon's orders, having the tonsure therefore and wearing the ecclesiastical cassock, going to Rome on the invitation of His Eminence the Cardinal di Bibbiena, and immediately on his arrival making a portion of the great man's household. The lines next following the two quoted above continue his autobiographical notices in this wise:

> A Roma andò di poi, come a Dio piacque,
> Pien di molta speranza, e di concetto
> D'un certo suo parente Cardinale
> Che non gli fece mai nè bene nè male.*

* "Then he went to Rome, as it pleased God, full of many hopes, and of great expectations from a certain cardinal, a relation of his, who never did anything for him." The literal translation is "who never did him any good or evil." But the way in which the phrase is used by the Tuscans makes it equivalent in meaning to the words I have used.

The above are not the only words to be found in his writings which impress one disagreeably with the notion that Francesco Berni was a thankless as well as in other respects a graceless ne'er-do-well! The Cardinal brought him to water, but could not make him drink! He gave him a home in his house, and placed him on the high road to fortune. But Berni was not a man whom it was possible to advance to high dignity. In any other place than Rome, in any other profession than the Church, and in any other age of the world, he would probably have fared much worse than he did—would have been turned out of any decent man's house—certainly out of that of a dignitary of the Church!

Berni, however, in the Rome of Leo X. was a very popular man. Some men's lives have been failures because they have fallen upon times or spheres not suited to them. But Rome under Leo X. was of all the world and all the ages the very spot and time for Berni. At any other time or place he would have been a witty amusing dog, but too loose and scurrilous a good-for-naught to have reached a higher or more reputable social standing than that of a tavern-haunter and boon

companion. But at the court of Christ's Vicegerent, where sock and buskin alike were worn beneath the cassock, and the most profligate wit as naturally took to "holy orders" as a fish takes to water, Francesco Berni was the right man in the right place! "Already at twenty or one or two and twenty he was universally in request. No feast or revel was complete without him, and ecclesiastical honours and secure wealth awaited his mature age. Already his burlesque and satiric muse had made him the delight and the terror of Rome; and his friends might say of him that they could neither live with him nor without him, so charming was his ever-ready wit; so terrible his biting and pungent tongue; so pleasant the easy license of his high-kilted muse; so dangerous the malignant stab of his dagger-pen."*

Yet he was far from being contented with his lot; and it would seem that his sole cause of discontent was that some modicum of work was demanded of him by those at whose cost he lived. Few men have ever so frankly and naïvely protested

* A few sentences of this estimate of Berni and of his position at Rome have been taken from a privately printed sketch by the author, written some years ago.

that what they wanted in the world was to eat, drink, sleep, and do nothing at all. In that same sixty-seventh Canto of the "Orlando," already quoted, he says, speaking of his life in Rome:

> Quanto peggio facea, più aveva da fare ;
> Aveva sempre in seno, e sotto il braccio,
> Dietro e innanzi di lettere un fastello,
> E scriveva e stillavasi il cervello.
> Quivi anche, o fusse la disgrazia, o 'l poco
> Merito suo, non ebbe troppo bene.*

Where the cause of his miscarriage was is not far to seek; for a few lines farther on in the same passage we read:

> Nessun di servitù giammai si dolse
> Nè più ne fu nemico di costui ;
> E pure a consumarlo il Diavol tolse ;
> Sempre il tenne fortuna in forza altrui.
> Sempre che comandargli il padron volse
> Di non servirlo venne voglia a lui !
> Voleva far da se, non comandato ;
> Com' un gli comandava, era spacciato !

* "The worse he did his work the more he had to do ! He always had a mass of letters in his bosom, under his arm, before him and behind him ; and wrote and wrote, and spun out his brains ! Here, too, whether it were ill-luck or his small deservings, he did not get on very well."

Cacce, musiche, feste, suoni e balli,
Giuochi ; nessuna sorte di piacere
Troppo il movea : piacevangli i cavalli
Assai ; ma si pasceva del vedere,
Che modo non avea di comperalli ;
Onde il suo sommo bene era in jacere
Nudo, lungo, disteso ; e 'l suo diletto
Era non far mai nulla, e starsi in letto !*

And in another place, writing to the "Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici," a poetical begging letter after the manner of the times, he tells him fairly that, whatever he may be disposed to do for him,

Non bisogna parlarmi di fatica,
Che come dici il cotal della peste,
Quella è la vera mia mortal nemica.†

And many other equally frank passages might be

* "No man ever complained more bitterly of having to serve, or was more completely an enemy to it, than this man. And yet the devil made a point of wearing him out at it ! Fortune always kept him in the power of others ! As sure as the master wanted to give him any orders he was beset by the desire of not doing what was wanted ! He wanted to do as he pleased of his own accord, not at the word of command. As soon as anyone gave him orders it was all up with him ! Hunting, music, feastings, songs and dances, sports—no sort of pleasure was too much for him. He delighted in horses ; but had to satisfy himself with looking at them, for he had not the means of buying them. So that his *summum bonum* was to lie naked, stretched out at his length ; and his delight was to do nothing whatever, and lie a-bed !"

† "You must not speak to me of work ! As the man said of the plague, *that* is my true and mortal enemy !"

cited from his works, in which he celebrates the delights of eating and drinking and having nothing whatever to do. In one passage he pictures to himself the delight of combining all enjoyments by lying in bed while some kind hand puts the good things into his mouth! And this is the man who thinks that it must be ill-luck or the devil himself which prevented him, who had not a farthing in the world, from doing well in the service of an employer! And while writing thus of himself, he absolutely has the face to complain of all his patrons that they did not do enough for him! Certainly no other social system in the world would have done by a very great deal so much for him as Leo X.'s Church did!

In 1520 Bernardo Dovizi, Cardinal di Bibbiena, died, poisoned, as was thought at the time, "in a couple of eggs." It was supposed, too, that the contriver of his death by this means was no other than Christ's Vicegerent on earth; and that the motive was to be found in certain incautious words which the Cardinal had let drop as to conversations he had had with Francis I. of France, suggestive of the possibility of his—the Cardinal of Bibbiena's—succession to the Chair of St. Peter after Leo's death. But the total inability of the medical science of the

time to discover the causes of death in a vast number of cases, combined, with the indubitable fact of the common use of poison, to cause suspicion of foul play to rest on almost every death, of a notable person, the cause of which was not altogether evident. And, as Tiraboschi remarks, if Leo X. had poisoned him, he would not have permitted the body to be opened, which was done. The argument is not to my mind a very conclusive one. Nevertheless Tiraboschi may be right.

Berni, however, at the unexpected death of his patron once again fell on his legs with a fortune he certainly did not deserve. For he passed into the service of the Cardinal's nephew, Angelo Dovizi, who was Protonotary of the Church, though he must have been a young man much about Berni's age. Nevertheless he was not more contented with him than he had been with the Cardinal. Here is what he says, in continuation of the passage from the sixty-seventh Canto of the "Orlando" above quoted :

Morto lui, stette con un suo nipote,
Dal qual trattato fu come dal zio ;
Onde le bolgie trovandosi vote,
Di mutar cibo gli venne desio.*

* "At his death (that of the Cardinal) he remained with a nephew of his, by whom he was treated as he had been by the uncle. So that, finding his pockets empty, he conceived a wish to change his quarters."

It must be supposed that the Protonotary still required him to *do* something in return for his maintenance. That he was not upon other than pleasant, and by no means distant or formal, terms with his patron is abundantly evident from the following curious and characteristic passage from a letter—one of the thirteen which alone have been preserved—written by Berni to the Protonotary from Rome on November 3rd, 1522. It appears that there was pestilence at Rome, and that Messer Angelo Dovizi had thought fit to run away from it. The letter begins thus:

"'Oh, blind that ye are! what boots it to labour and toil so earnestly? Ye must all return to our great primeval mother! And your name will no more be heard!' This is a terzet from Petrarch; and is good for quoting to people who run hither and thither, to avoid the pestilence, as you do! I should have been better pleased than I ever was in my life, if what George told me had been true—that you have got the pestilence there* too! So that you should have been obliged to hurry back here, and I should have shut the door in your face, for fear of contagion

* Angelo Dovizi, it would seem from another passage in the letter, was at Cività Castellana.

from you! I begin to think you are like Æneas, who went wandering round the world, was driven first from Thrace, then from Crete, then from the Strophedes, and then was within an inch of having to turn back home again in desperation! Believe me, when you have searched thoroughly, you will not find a better or a safer place to live in than Rome. And you will be so convinced of it that you will wish you had never left it. Don't fancy yourself safe where you are! I hope to God that fifteen days will not pass before you have the plague there; and then you will have to run for it a second time! And then where are we to go? To Santo Geminiano or to Banco? I know very well that the very last resource, and end of all the story, will be poor old Bibbiena. But while waiting to see what we shall see, I shall be told one of these days that Monsignore Angelo is at Bibbiena; as it was written to me the other day that you were at Florence, though there were no truth in it. Then what a good laugh I shall have, and how I shall congratulate* myself! For if God gives

* Apparently he means "how I shall hug myself on my superior wisdom in advising you not to run from Rome, since it has ended in your seeking so wretched a refuge as Bibbiena!" It seems as if neither patron nor dependent looked back with much pleasure to the little place from which they were both sprung.

one grace to escape till next Christmas, there will not be a more contented man in Rome than I! But now, since you are at Cività, you might at least tell one in whose house you are lodging, and who is with you, and how I am to write to you from time to time. You ought to have thought of all these things, or at least of one of them, when you wrote to me yesterday morning in a furious hurry, as you always do. It would serve you right if I were to remain eight days without writing, since the small will you have to write is shown by your writing to others as you do to me. But the end of the matter is that it is fated that I must write to you every day, and return good for evil, as God does!"

He goes on to speak of the application of one of Messer Angelo's servants who had left him, for a character under his (Berni's) hand; which he says, he gave him "*in formâ cameræ cum honoribus et* oneribus!* You would have died of laughter, if you had seen it! So little by little you are getting rid of your family! What would you have! This fellow is gone. Dionisio is not here. Antonio has had leave of absence. Gio. Paolo talks of leaving. We

* Evidently some shop joke of the Protonotary's office.

shall be left rather too much to ourselves. You did well to free yourself from the mule and the grooms at one blow. But you must be a wizard to divine that the pestilence was to last as long as it has done, and that therefore you would not need a beast to ride in Rome. Perhaps we may as well get rid of the housing."

The letter is a long one, and goes on to speak of a variety of business matters in a way which clearly shows that Berni must have acted in the capacity of general house steward or superintendent—*intendente di casa*, as the Italians call it.

Nevertheless familiar, and almost somewhat more than familiar, as is the tone of this letter, it would seem that the young Protonotary could on occasion act as a master and a disciplinarian, and that the relations between him and his poet-factotum did not always go smoothly. We have nothing to show what the circumstances of the fault were, save that it sprang out of a violent love passion to which the poet fell a victim ; but it is certain that it was punished by dismissal from Messer Angelo's service. And notwithstanding that Berni in after times complains that the uncle did nothing for him, and that the nephew was no better than the uncle, he urgently

entreated Messer Angelo's pardon, which after awhile he seems to have obtained. He wrote to his angry patron more than one epistle in Latin verse, the gist of which is to protest his untirable affection, and, admitting his fault, to plead that it was an error deeply repented of.

> . . . Nam quod perditus ante malo flagraverim amore
> Et fuerim toto infamia nota foro,"*

he writes in one of these pieces, admitting that he had publicly disgraced himself. Again in another he addressed his angry patron in this strain :

> Ergo ego, te ante alios unum quem semper amavi,
> Unum qeem petii toto animo atque animâ.
> Cogor in extremas abiturus linquere terras,
> Et triste infelix mittor in exilium ?
> Nec tamen id merui, nisi amor facit ipse nocentem,
> Et titulus culpæ est perditè amasse meæ.†

And there is much more in the same strain. Probably Messer Angelo was not so well aware, as the modern

* "For that, lost as I before was, I burned with a bad passion, and became infamously known to the whole town . . ."

† "Must I then, who have always loved you better than all others, who always sought after you with all my heart and all my soul, be compelled to leave you, and go to dwell at the extremity of the earth (perhaps even at Bibbiena itself !) and, miserable as I am, be sent into a wretched exile? And yet I have not deserved it, unless love itself makes one guilty, and the gravamen of my fault is to have loved too well !"

student of his friend Berni is, that of all the men who ever lived Francesco Berni was one of the last who was likely ever to have felt a gleam of disinterested affection for any human being. But it is probable that he was not altogether the dupe of these fulsome protestations. Nevertheless, as has been said, the scapegrace poet was pardoned, and returned to his patron's house—to abuse him subsequently.

The desire which he expressed in the lines quoted in a previous page, to change rack and manger—"mutare cibo"—was gratified by passing from the service of the Protonotary Dovizi to that of the celebrated Giammatteo Giberti, Bishop of Verona, and *Datario* to Leo X., whose secretary he became. He has recorded of himself in the passage of the "Orlando" which has been so often quoted, that he remained with Monsignor Giberti seven years; and he has also told us elsewhere,* that he served sixteen years "in court," *i.e.* in the families of prelates attached to the Court of Rome.

La Corte avuto ha in presto
Sedici anni da me d'affanno e stento;
Ed io da Lei ducati quattrocento.†

* Sonnet beginning "Se mi vedesse la segreteria."

† "The Court has been served by me with sixteen years of struggles and privations; and I have had from the Court four hundred ducats."

He must therefore have been in the service of the Protonotary probably about six years, for he was seven with the Datario; and if we suppose him to have been three with the Cardinal Dovizi—*i.e.* the years from 1517 to 1520—six years in the service of the Protonotary would make up the time. And we must suppose him to have finally left Rome about the year 1533, when he was about thirty-five years old.

It says something in favour of Berni that he should have retained the position of secretary to such a man as Giammatteo Giberti for seven years. Giberti was not only one of the most learned men of that day in Europe, but, having been made Bishop of Verona at the early age of twenty-nine, he showed himself to be one of the most conscientious, able, and judicious of pastors. His business and administrative talents were so marked, and his knowledge of the general affairs of Europe so large, that Leo could not dispense with his important services in the position of "Datario," which, as things were then, embraced the most important concerns with which the Apostolic Court was called upon to deal; and much against his will the good Bishop, who consistently refused all further preferment, was detained at Rome much longer than he would willingly have been absent from his diocese. And to give poor ne'er-do-weel

Berni his due, though he ceases not to complain of the horrible necessity of working, he seems to have been better contented with his position as the Bishop's secretary than he was under either of his other masters. But of the four hundred crowns, which he says is all he ever got for his sixteen years' service, in the sonnet which has been already quoted, he declares

> Che ve ne son trecento,
> O più, a me per cortesia donati
> Da duoi che, soli son per me Prelati,
> Amendue registrati
> Nel libro del mio cor, ch' è in carta buona ;
> L'uno è Ridolfi, e quell' altro è Verona.*

Giberti's angelic nature compelled gratitude even from Francesco Berni!—a gratitude which was, however, as it is painful to say, very ephemeral, as will appear presently. He lets us know that he was often by no means contented with the work he was called upon to do. Upon one occasion—it must have been a little before 1524, for he speaks of it in a letter of that date as a recent incident—he was sent into the Abruzzi to regulate the business matters of an abbey,

* "But of this, three hundred or more were given to me, out of kindness, by two, who alone to my thinking deserve to be called Prelates; both of them registered in the book of my heart, which keeps durable accounts ; one of them is Ridolfi (the Florentine Cardinal of that name), and the other he of Verona."

which it is to be presumed his patron the Bishop of Verona held *in commendam* ; as he says :

> Mandato nell' Abruzzo a far quietanze
> E diventar fattor d'una Badia,
> In mezzo a certe genti
> Che son nimiche delle buone usanze.*

As I intimated just now, Berni's expression of kindness towards the Bishop of Verona was but an exceptional and passing phase of feeling. The Bishop was his employer, and demanded work from him. And that was all that was needed to ensure Berni's ill-will and abuse. Here is one among many other expressions of his discontent :

> S' io v' usassi di dire il fatto mio
> Come lo vo dicendo a questo e quello,
> Forse pietà m' avreste,
> O qualche Benefizio mi dareste.
> Pur fo, pur scrivo anch' io
> E m' affatico assai, e sudo e stento
> Anchorch' io sappia, ch' io nòn vi contento;
> Voi mi straziate, e mi volete morto,
> Ed al corpo de Giove avete 'l torto.†

* "Sent into the Abruzzi to give receipts, and become the steward of an abbey, among a set of people who are no disciples of the code of good manners."

† "If it were my wont to complain to you of my affairs, as I talk of them to this man and that, perhaps you would have pity on me, or would give me some benefice. Yet I labour and write and weary myself enough, and sweat and suffer all sorts of privations, although I know that I do not content you ! You wear me out, and would fain I were dead ! And, by the body of Jove, you are wrong !"

It was hardly likely that the Bishop, whose first and anxious care it was on taking possession of his bishopric to root out from it all unworthy and incompetent priests, would give a benefice to Francesco Berni. The wonder is that he tolerated him as his secretary for seven years! A portion of these years, however, were passed at Verona, where the secretary seemed to have remained very unwillingly. Yet it is clear, from a well-known passage in the "Orlando" as well as from some other indications, that he wrote a great part of his poem in that city; and when he was not in an ill-humour he could speak well of it. It would seem too, one may remark, from his having composed so long a poem there, that he could not have been so overburdened with work as secretary to the Bishop. Here is the famous passage in which he describes Verona, and its river the Adige. It is a relief to have something to quote that is not malicious and scurrilous ribaldry:

Tu, che per l' alto, largo, e chiaro letto
Ratto correndo fai grato romore,
Raffrena il corso tuo veloce alquanto
Mentre alle ripe tue scrivendo io canto.
Rapido fiume, che d' alpestre vena
Impetuosamente a noi discendi,
E quella terra sopra ogni altra amena
Per mezzo, a guisa di Meandro, fendi,

Quella che di valor, d' ingegno è piena,
Per cui tu con più lume, Italia, splendi,
Di cui la fama in te chiara risuona,
Eccelsa, graziosa, alma Verona! *

But here is his estimate of the same Verona when he was in his more ordinary mood, and, instead of saying what he deemed ornamental to his epic, spoke his own sentiments. "Verona," he says in one of his small occasional pieces of verse,

Verona è una terra ch' ha le mura
Parte di pietre e parte di mattoni;

and after thirty or forty lines of sufficiently flat and insipid ridicule, ends by saying that the inhabitants,

Portan tutto l' anno gli stivali,
Perchè i fanghi immortali
Ch' adornan le lor strade graziose
Producon queste ed altre belle cose;
Ma quattro più famose,

* "Thou, that in thy deep, large, and clear bed, swiftly running makest a pleasant sound, slacken thy rapid course awhile, what time writing on thy banks, I sing. O rapid river, that with Alpine strain impetuously decendest to us, and cleavest in the midst, after the fashion of the Mæander, that city, pleasant above all others, which is full of valour and genius, by whose virtue thou, O Italy, shinest with a more splendid light, and whose fame resounds glorious in all thy extent, illustrious, gracious, genial Verona!"

The phrase "a guisa di Meandro" has its justification in the extreme sinuosity of the Adige at Verona.

The stanza and a half quoted have nothing very fine about them. But they are not so bad as they seem in the baldness of a literal translation. The sentence beginning "rapido fiume" is, it will be observed, not complete.

Da sotterrarvi un drento insino a gli occhi,
Fagiuoli e porci, e poeti, e pidoocchi.*

Upon a subsequent occasion, having been called to task, as it would seem, for his abuse of the city, he writes an apology to the following effect:

S'io dissi mai nessun mal di Verona,
Dico ch' io feci male e tristamente;
E ne son tristo, pentito, e dolente
Come al mondo ne fosse mai persona.
Verona è una terra bella e buona;
E cieco e sordo è chi nol vede o sente;
Se, tu, or si perdona a chi si pente,
Alma città, ti prego, or mi perdona!†

There is a curious and amusing difference of tone and manner perceptible between the spontaneous ribaldry of the former outbreak, and the almost perceptibly ironical hyperbole of praise in the apology.

Of his various journeys with his patron the Bishop

* "Verona is a city which has walls partly of stone and partly of brick. . . . Its inhabitants wear boots all the year round, because the eternal mud which adorns their sweet streets, produces this among other fine things; but specially these four famous ones, of which there is enough to bury one over head and ears—beans, pigs, poets, and lice!"

† "If ever I said any ill of Verona, I declare that I did ill and unworthily. And I am as sorry, repentant, and grieved at it as anyone in the world can be! Verona is a good and beautiful city; and he is blind and deaf who cannot see it or hear it; if only thou pardonest, as those who repent are pardoned, fair city, I beg of thee pardon me!"

of Verona, we have no record save here and there a chance word or two in some of his writings, which shows him to have undertaken such. We hear of him at Padua and at Venice, where, he says in a "Capitolo" addressed to Messer Francesco de Milano,

> Stiamo in una contrada, ed in un rio
> Presso alla Trinità, e all' Arsenale,
> Incontro a certe monache di Dio,
> Che fan la Pasqua come il Carnovale ;
> Id est che non sono troppo scrupulose.*

He was at Rome at the death of Leo X. in 1521, and at the election of Adrian VI. in the following year, and at that of Clement VII. in 1523. As might easily be guessed, Berni was among those of the clergy at Rome who were most disgusted at the election of a sincere, a simple-mannered, and reforming Pope. He has left more than one passage in abuse and ridicule of him. Of his successor Clement VII., the second Medici Pope, he does not speak with more respect. His lines on this unfortunate Papacy, during which Clement was continually striving to hold his own by playing off

* "We live in a street and on a canal near the Trinity church, at the Arsenal, close to certain nuns dedicated to God, who keep Easter and Carnival all alike—that is to say, who are not over and above scrupulous."

Charles V. against Francis I., and impartially deceiving both of them turn and turn about, are a really clever *résumé* of Clement's government:

> Un papato composto di rispetti,
> Di considerazioni e di discorsi,
> Di più, di poi, di ma, di si, di forsi,
> Di pur, di assai parole senza effetti, etc.*

In another place he abuses Clement, of whom in truth it was impossible that the grossest language should say more than he richly deserved, in terms so atrocious that it is impossible to reproduce them.

It is clear that he was at Rome at the time of the ever-memorable sack of the City by the Constable Bourbon in 1527, and that he lost what little he possessed. It must have been about the year 1533, and about the thirty-fifth or thirty-sixth of his age, that he left the service of the Bishop of Verona, and probably Rome at the same time, to spend the remainder of his days at Florence, on the revenues of a canonry of the cathedral there, which had been given him, before that time, but how long before is uncertain. Neither is it known by whose interest he

* "A papacy composed of respects for persons, of considerations, of talk, of 'besides,' of 'thens,' of 'buts,' of 'yeses,' of 'perhapses,' of 'howevers,' and plenty of words without any results."

became a canon of the cathedral. But there can be little doubt that it was given to him by Alexandro de' Medici, with whom for a time he was in high favour. That he possessed this preferment before he left Rome is clear from a letter still extant, in which he says: "I am going to Florence to make love to my mother for a fortnight or twenty days, and amuse myself a little with the fair one you wot of, attend a little in my place in the choir, and then be off with the grace of God, who knows when we may meet next."*

What Berni's "haunts" were during the years that he lived in Rome may be guessed with tolerable accuracy by those who have read the foregoing pages.

The spots which Dante, which Petrarch, which

* The passage in the text is not an accurate translation of the Italian of Berni's letter, which runs thus: "Vo per la via di Firenze per far l'amore con mia madre quindici o venti dì, *andare un poco in coro con la zanfarda*, e poi truccar via al nome di Dio; il qual sa quando ci rivedremo." Italian scholars will understand why I avoid explaining to English readers the cause of the inaccuracy of my translation. But I also confess myself much puzzled by the words italicised. The plain meaning of them seems incredible. But that "coro" is used in its ordinary sense is clear from the fact that the biographers use the passage to prove that Berni possessed his canonry when he wrote it. And that the lexicographer, Fanfani, supposed "zanfarda" to be used in its ordinary sense is proved by his quotation of this very passage in illustration of that meaning of the word. I leave the puzzle to Italian scholars to determine whether the passage indicates a trait of Cinquecento manners hitherto unnoted!

even jovial fun-loving Boccaccio, most loved to frequent in the Eternal City may easily be imagined. They would have loved to stand amid the then overgrown and undistinguished ruins of the Palatine, and, wrapped in wonder-born meditation, ponder over the cumbered and scarce emerging ruins of the Forum: to tread the Via Sacra, or from the sun-bathed western front of the unspoiled Lateran gaze across the aqueduct-bestridden campagna, to where the declining sun touched the Alban hills with reddening light, as he touched them when they shaded the street of Alba Longa at their base. But the imagination need take no such flights to picture to itself the haunts best loved by Berni in the Eternal City. There was a certain club, an "Accademia," as it was called after the fashion of the time, the distinctive title of which was more appropriate than the generic one. It was the "Accademia de' Vignaguoli," to which most of the wits and poets whom Leo X. called about him belonged, and where Berni was by general consent, the king of the revels. These were held in the house of Messer Uberto Strozzi, a gentleman of Mantua. Mauro, a slipshod poet of the Bernesque kind; Monsignore della Casa, another Tuscan, a writer of Italian and Latin verse, whose

letters and translations from Greek and Latin classics, especially Thucydides, are worth more than his poetry, and whose life and many of whose writings, prelate as he was, are hardly, if at all, less licentious than those of his friend Berni; Fiorenzuola, another small poet Bini, Molza, Caporale of Perugia, all imitators of Berni, whose *exemplum vitiis imitabile* deceived them, were all "academicians of the Vintagers Academy;" men, most of them, who "served cardinals," or lived as hangers on of the Church in some capacity or other, and spent their nights together, after days of scribbling in some "chancery" or other. Could we trace our Berni's other "haunts" in the City of the Seven Hills with more particular accuracy, the result would not be edifying.

It must have been, as has been seen, about his thirty-sixth year that he settled himself at Florence, to live in the quiet enjoyment of leisure, on the revenue of his canonry. And here is his own description of his personal appearance, as we may picture him to ourselves in loosely buttoned, thread-bare cassock, lounging lazily across the sunny Piazza del Duomo, while the bell in Giotto's tower overhead is sounding its last summons, to take his place in the choir, and discharge, as perfunctorily as possible,

the small duties of his almost sinecure place; in no wise hurrying himself, but stopping at every minute to exchange some jesting word with everyone he fell in with. "In person," he says,

> Di persona era grande, magro e schietto;
> Lunghe e sottil le gambe forte aveva,
> E 'l naso grande, e il viso largo, e stretto
> Lo spazio che le cilie divideva;
> Concavo l' occhio aveva azzuro e netto;
> La barba folta quasi il nascondeva,
> Se 'l avesse portata, ma il padrone
> Aveva con le barbe aspra quistione.*

The life he led at Florence was such as caused no little scandal even at that day, which one might have thought was impossible. A passage from the unpublished "History of the Italian Poets," by Zilioli which is cited by Mazzuchelli, but which it is impossible to print in its entirety on an English page, tells us that Berni "died in Florence, whither he had

* "In figure he was tall, and thin, and clean made; he had long, thin, but strong legs. And his nose was large, as was also his face; but the space which divided the eyebrows was narrow. He had hollow eyes, blue, and well opened; and his thick beard almost hid him, or would have done so if he had worn one. But the master had a special dislike to beards."

Who the master alluded to was there is nothing to show. But, despite the master's special dislike, the portrait of him still to be seen in the gallery at Florence shows him a handsome-looking man with a big flowing beard.

retired not many years before, tired of following courts, and contenting himself with the canonry he possessed in that city. The revenues of this preferment enabled him to lead a very jovial life, enjoying the companionship of men of letters, who competed with each other for his acquaintance; and . . . To this was added the evil report of gluttony, drunkenness, and gambling. So that amusing himself with greater license than became a priest, and sharing in the habits of young men, it often happened that, led by the vivacity and joyousness of his high spirits, he fell into disorders and scrapes." If it had been possible to give the whole of this tolerant censor's account of Berni's mode of life, the nineteenth-century reader would be rather astonished at the quiet moderation of the language with which he closes it!

Nevertheless his companionship was much sought not only by the younger literary men of his own stamp, but by the most magnificent of the aristocracy of the city. He lived, we are told, on terms of great intimacy with both Alessandro de' Medici, and his cousin Ippolito, the Cardinal, much as those two young men hated each other. They constantly used to find him in the palace of the Cybo family (the Princes of Massa), which Alexander was in the habit of frequenting in search of amusement; to which Berni

was no doubt very capable of contributing. He had always some new *vers de société*, of a kind adapted to the society in question; something to help empty brains to a laugh. He had an aged mother, an uncle, and two aunts still living at the time, as it should seem, of his own death; and here is the way he described them for the amusement of his friends: "Why should people go to Rome to see antiquities?" he begins; "I can show them better antiquities here! I have a mother, and two aunts, and an uncle, who look for all the world like Egyptian gods!

Io gli stimo un tesoro,
E mostrerogli a chi vuol videre
Per anticaglie naturali e vere.
L' altre non son intere!
A qual manca la testa, a qual le mani;
Son morte, e pajon state in man de' cani.
Questi son vivi e sani;
E dicon che non voglion mai morire
La morte chiama, ed ei la lascian dire!
Dunque chi s' ha a chiarire
Dell' immortalità di vita eterna,
Venga a Firenze a mia taverna.*

* "I deem them a treasure, and will show them to anyone who wants to see them, as genuine and true antiquities. The others are not entire. One is without a head, another without hands! They are dead, and seem as if they had been among the dogs! These of mine are alive and in good condition, and say they don't mean ever to die. Death calls them, and they let him call! So that if anyone has any doubts to clear up as to the immortality of the life eternal, let him come to my shop in Florence!"

Rather poor buffoonery, it must be confessed! Friendships of the sort of that which existed between such souls as Alessandro de' Medici and Francesco Berni are not apt to be very durable; and it would seem that Alessandro de' Medici escaped the impartial stabbing of Berni's dagger-pen as little as the exemplary Bishop of Verona. For here is a sonnet, which avenges some real or fancied affront which the Prince had offered to the Poet:

Empio Signor, che de la roba altrui
Lieto ti vai godendo, e del sudore,
Venir ti possa un canchero nel cuore
Che ti porti di peso a i regni bui!
E venir possa un canchero a colui
Che di quella città ti fe Signore!
E s' egli è altri che ti dia favore
Possa venir un canchero anche a lui.
. . . . . .
. . . . . .
Non potrebb' esser, che non fosse tristo!
Or tienla col malan, che Dio ti dia,
Quella, e ciò che tu hai di male acquisto;
Ch' un dì mi renderai la roba mia.*

* "Impious lord, who triumphest in the possession of another's goods, and in the enjoyment of another's labour, may a cancerous sore infest thy heart, and carry thee off bodily to the realms of darkness! And may a like infliction fall on him who made thee lord of this city! (Mazzuchelli thinks that the true reading is '*questa* città.') And if there is any other who extends favour to you, may a cancer take him also! . . . Now keep, with a curse, which may God send you, that which you have so foully gained! For the day will come when you shall give up to me what is mine!"

A strange story is related by several writers of the sixteenth century, and was apparently generally believed, respecting the death of Berni. Or rather there were two stories; for some relate the matter in one way and some in another. It is asserted, on the one hand, the Duke Alexander had the poet poisoned for having refused to undertake, at his instance, the poisoning of the Cardinal Ippolito. On the other, it is said that it was the Cardinal who asked Berni to poison Alexander, and caused him to be poisoned because he would not undertake the job! There are great difficulties in the way of believing either of these stories to be true. But none of those who have given their time and labour to the investigation of the matter seem to think that any improbability rests upon either statement arising from an estimate of what any of the parties may have been capable of. It seems to be thought not unlikely that the Duke or the Cardinal, or both of them, may have made such a proposal to the Canon. The difficulties connected with the matter are of a more substantial kind—difficulties of chronology. The Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici died in August, 1535, poisoned, as was generally believed, and history has adopted the belief, by, or by the contrivance, of the Duke Alessandro. It is therefore

certain that the Poet was not poisoned by the Cardinal for refusing to poison Alessandro. And Mazzuchelli, in his "Life of Berni," remarks that it is not probable that he was poisoned by the Duke for refusing to poison the Cardinal, because Berni lived about * a year after the Cardinal's death. But I must confess I do not see the force of such an argument. Not even the Duke Alessandro could order and achieve the poisoning of a Canon of Florence, living in his own house, from one day to another! It might surely well be that such a purpose might have to wait a year, or more than that, for its accomplishment. Mazzuchelli thinks that the Cardinal, who no doubt was desirous of murdering his cousin the Duke, might very possibly have been led to think that Berni was a fitting instrument for his purpose by the sonnet above quoted, which indicates so ferocious a hatred towards Alessandro. But would it not be perhaps more in accordance with probability to suppose that the sonnet in question was written in consequence of a similar proposal having been made to the Poet by the Duke? And the expressions in the sonnet, which allude to the possession by the Duke of what

* It would be more in accordance with facts, I think, to say "at least" instead of "about."

belonged to another, may refer to that which had been gained by the death of the Cardinal. The last line, however, "the day will come when you shall render up that which belongs to me—*la roba mia*"—does not seem to tally with such an explanation. Could it have been that the *roba mia* was the wrongfully withheld price, if not of the commission of the deed, of keeping silence respecting the proposition? All the authorities agree in representing that Berni rejected the proposition, whether that of the Cardinal to murder the Duke, or that of the Duke to murder the Cardinal. But that one or the other proposition was made can be hardly doubted, from the consensus of the authorities as to this point, the evidence of which is rendered more strong by their difference as to the other. As far as the character of the poet is concerned, the good to be credited to him on the score of having refused to become a hired assassin has to be balanced, somewhat disadvantageously, by the necessity of placing to his debit the fact that those who knew him well deemed him a promising subject for such a proposition.

Mazzuchelli says that Berni died about a year after the Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici, *i.e.* in 1536. But the date of his death is very curiously uncertain.

Poccianti, in his catalogue of Florentine writers, says that Berni "flourished" (*floruit*) in 1550. But this may well be taken as having no pretension to exactitude. Crescimbeni, in his history of Italian poetry, says that he lived beyond 1538. But neither is this writer's authority worth much on such a point. Niccolò Franco in a supposed letter to Petrarch in the other world, written in 1538, speaks of Berni as having been sent away from Florence by the Medici on account of certain scurrilous writings, and "where he is now, nobody knows." But it is thought that the *Medici* here mentioned may have been, not the Princes of the name, but the doctors, against whom Berni had written much scurrilous abuse; that the sending away from Florence may have been sending him to the other world; and that the nobody knows where he is now, may be meant to express doubts as to his fate there. Paolo Giovio, in a letter to the Bishop of Faenza, dated May 31st, 1535, tells his correspondent as a bit of recent news that Bernia* the poet of Arezzo had died of apoplexy, as had also Lucimano, Bishop of Chiusi. But it seems, in the first place, doubtful whether Giovio is speaking of

* The name was sometimes so written, and sometimes Berni.

our Berni at all. In the second place, he is always so inaccurate a writer that his authority for a matter of fact is worth little or nothing. And, in the third place, he seems to have been especially untrustworthy on the present occasion, for no such Bishop as "Lucimano" was ever known at Chiusi, and no Bishop of Chiusi at all died that year.

Then again Annibale Caro, writing on June 12th, 1539, in reply to a friend who had asked him for a copy of Berni's "Capitolo dell' Ago" ("Chapter on a Needle"), which is one of the most licentious of his pieces of verse, writes thus: "The 'Ago' of Bernia is not to be found save castrated and mutilated as you have seen it; because he never published it. And after his death, the copy which goes about was obtained for the most part from Monsignore Ardinghello, who, having heard it recited twice only, learned it by heart. (A nice job for a prelate!) If any further lines can be supplied from the memory of anybody else, I will see to sending it to you entire." But this letter was written from Rome, which was a very long way off from Florence in those days. It was not written by any personal acquaintance of Berni; and its information seems to me far less to be trusted than that of another letter, which remains to

be mentioned. Monsignore Giorgio della Casa, who was, as we have seen, intimate with Berni, writing *from Florence* on December 20th, 1543, to his friend Gualteruzzi, says: "I will give your message to Messer Francesco Berni when I see him." And that the date of this letter is no typographical error is vouched for by its place in the regular chronologically arranged series of Della Casa's letters. Now it seems to me that this is final; and proves that the other persons whose letters have been quoted, writing at a distance from Florence, were mistaken in supposing the poet to be dead. Their error may perhaps be held to indicate that during the latter years of his life the poet, probably in declining health, led a more quiet and retired life, and was less heard of by his contemporaries in the other cities of Italy. I hold it to be certain, therefore, that Berni lived later than the end of 1543, at which date he would have been only about forty-five.

"The facility of his rhyme, the naturalness of his expressions, the vivacity of his thoughts and jests, joined to a special excellence of style, are so extraordinary that he must be considered to be at the head of his own school of poetry, which is accordingly named the Bernesque after him.

Though some have spoken of him with small esteem, the great body of writers is in accord in awarding him distinguished praise. It is not true that this mode of writing cost him but little trouble, as might be supposed by the reader of it. His original manuscripts show that every line was altered and turned in various manners. The great fault of his works is the abundance of *double entendre*, and indecent allusions, on which the matters treated by him often turn. So that we do not know how to recommend the reading of him to anybody." This is the opinion of the Conte Mazzuchelli, a layman and a Tuscan. The Roman priest, Crescimbeni, says that in satire "Berni far exceeded all the other Tuscans except Dante and Ariosto (who was not a Tuscan at all); and if it were not that he allowed himself sometimes to be guilty of an excess of malignity often joined to impiety, he certainly might have been placed on a level with those poets." Possibly as much may be said of him as regards Ariosto, though there is often a loftier tone in the "Orlando Furioso" than Berni ever reaches, and not rarely a beauty of imagery and delicacy of fancy, almost Spenserian, of which the dirty-minded Canon of Florence was incapable. As for the idea that there

can exist any sort of comparison between him and Dante, or that this, that, or the other change or improvement might have entitled him to rank as his equal, the bare notion of such possibility is sufficient to prove, once for all, that Arcadian Crescimbeni, however large a knowledge of his country's innumerable versifiers he may have had, was about as competent a judge of poetry as a bat which flies in the dark chambers of the Great Pyramid may be of its construction.

Berni's name has for the last three centuries occupied, and still continues to occupy, such a position on the Italian Parnassus that it could not fitly have been omitted from our little gallery of the best known Italian poets. But I cannot better conclude this notice of him and his works than by echoing Mazzuchelli's dictum, that I really cannot recommend anybody to read him. The sole real value of his writings now is the contribution they furnish to the picture of the ways and manners and morals of his time and clime; and that I trust the reader will have obtained from the foregoing pages.

GUARINI.

GUARINI.

PASTORAL poetry had in Italy a tendency to rapid degeneration from the first. "Decipit exemplum vitiis imitabile." The earliest "pastorals" were far from being without merit, and merit of a high order. But they were eminently "vitiis imitabiles." Two specimens of Italian Arcadian poetry stand out, from the incredibly huge mass of such productions still extant, superior to all the innumerable imitations to which they give rise in a more marked degree even than "originals" usually surpass imitations in value. These are the "Aminta" of Tasso, and the "Pastor Fido" of the poet with whom it is the object of these pages to make the English nineteenth-century reader, who never will find the time to read him, in some degree acquainted—Batista Guarini. It would be difficult to say which of these two celebrated

pastoral dramas was received with the greater amount of delight and enthusiasm by the world of their contemporaries, or even which of them is the better performance. The almost simultaneous production of these two masterpieces in their kind is a striking instance of the, one may almost say, epidemic nature of the influences which rule the production of the human intellect; influences which certainly did not cease to operate for many generations after that of the authors of the "Aminta" and the "Pastor Fido," although the servile imitation of those greatly admired works unquestionably went for much in causing the overwhelming flood of pastorals which deluged Italy immediately subsequent to their enormous success.

I have said that it would be difficult to assign a pre-eminence to either of these poems. But it must not be supposed that it is intended thence to insinuate an equality between the authors of them. Tasso would occupy no lower place on the Italian Parnassus if he had never written the "Aminta." His fame rests upon a very much larger and firmer basis. But Guarini would be nowhere—would not be heard of at all—had he not written the "Pastor Fido." Having, however, produced that work—a work of which forty editions are said to have been printed

in his lifetime, and which has been translated into almost every civilised language, including Latin, Greek, and Hebrew—he has always filled a space in the eyes of his countrymen, and occupied a position in the roll of fame, which render his admission as one of our select band here imperative. He is, besides, a representative poet; the head and captain of the pastoral school, which attained everywhere so considerable a vogue, and in Italy such colossal proportions.

Guarini was born in the year 1537, in Ferrara, desolate, dreary, shrunken, grass-grown, tumble-down Ferrara, which in the course of one half-century gave to the world, besides a host of lesser names, three such poets as Tasso, Ariosto, and Guarini. Ariosto died four years before Guarini was born; but Tasso was nearly his contemporary, being but seven years his junior.

In very few cases in all the world and in all ages has it happened that intellectual distinction has been the appanage of one family for as many generations as in that of the Guarini. They come originally from Verona, where Guarino, the first of the family on record, who was born in 1370, taught the learned languages, and was one of the most notable of the

band of scholars who laboured at the restoration of classical literature. He lived to be ninety years old, and is recorded to have had twenty-three sons. It is certain that he had twelve living in 1438. One of them, Giovanni Batista, succeeded his father in his professorship at Ferrara, to which city the old scholar had been invited by Duke Hercules I. It would seem that another of his sons must also have shared the work of teaching in the University of Ferrara; for Batista the poet was educated by his great-uncle Alessandro, and succeeded him in his professorship. Of the poet's father we only learn that he was a mighty hunter, and, further, that he and his poet-son were engaged in litigation respecting the inheritance of the poet's grandfather and great-uncle. It is probable that the two old scholars wished to bequeath their property, which included a landed estate, to their grandson and great nephew, who already was manifesting tastes and capacities quite in accordance with their own, rather than to that exceptional member of the race who cared for nothing but dogs and horses.

Nor was Batista the last of his race who distinguished himself in the same career. His son succeeded him in his chair at the university; and we

have thus at least four generations of scholars and professors following the same course in the same university, which was in their day one of the most renowned in Europe.

All this sounds very stable, very prosperous, very full of the element of contentment. And there is every reason to believe that the great-grandfather, the grandfather, the great-uncle, the son, were all as tranquil and contented and happy as well-to-do scholars in a prosperous university city should be. But not so the poet. His life was anything but tranquil, or happy, or contented. The lives of few men, it may be hoped, have been less so.

Yet his morning was brilliant enough. He distinguished himself so remarkably by his success in his early studies that, on the death of his great-uncle Alexander when he was only nineteen, he was appointed to succeed him. This was in 1556, when Hercules II. was Duke. of Ferrara, and when that court of the Este princes was at the apogee of its splendour, renown, and magnificence. The young professor remained working at the proper labours of his profession for ten years; and they were in all probability the best and happiest, the only happy ones, of his life. Happy is the nation, it has been said,

which has no history; and much the same probably may be said of an individual. Respecting these ten years of Guarini's life but little has been recorded. No doubt the chronicle of them would have been monotonous enough. The same quiet duties quietly and successfully discharged; the same morning walk to his school, the same evening return from it, through the same streets, with salutations to the same friends, and leisurely pauses by the way to chat, Italian fashion, with one and another, as they were met in the streets, not then, as now, deserted, grass-grow, and almost weird in their pale sun-baked desolation, but thronged with bustling citizens, mingled with gay courtiers, and a very unusually large proportion of men whose names were known from one end of Italy to the other. Those school-haunts in the Ferrarese University were haunts which the world-weary ex-professor must often throughout the years of his remaining life—some forty-five of them, for he did not die till 1612, when he was seventy-five —have looked back on as the best and happiest of his storm-tossed existence.

There is, however, one record belonging to this happy time which must not be forgotten. It was at Padua, *Padova la dotta*, as she has been in all ages

and is still called, Padua the learned, in the year 1565. Guarini was then in his twenty-eighth year, and had been a professor at Ferrara for the last eight years. Probably it was due to the circumstance that his friend and fellow-townsman, Torquato Tasso, was then pursuing his studies at Padua, that the young Ferrarese professor turned his steps in that direction, bound "on a long vacation ramble." Tasso was only one-and-twenty at the time; but he was already a member of the famous Paduan Academy of the "Etherials," which Guarini was not. And we may readily fancy the pride and pleasure with which the younger man, doing the honours of the place to his learned friend, procured him to be elected a member of the "Etherials." Guarini (so called *nel secolo*—in the world) was *Il Costante*—the "Constant One" among the "Etherials." Scipio Gonzaga, who became subsequently the famous Cardinal, spoke an oration of welcome to him on his election. Then what congratulations, what anticipations of fame, what loving protestations of eternal friendship, what naïve acceptance of the importance and serious value of their Etherial Academic play, as the two youths strolling at the evening hour among the crowds of gravely-clad but in no wise gravely-speaking students who

thronged the colonnades in deep shadow under their low-browed arches, sally forth from beneath them as the sun nears the west, on to the vast open space which lies around the great church of St. Antony! Advancing in close talk they come up to Donatello's superb equestrian statue of the Venetian General Gattamelata, and lean awhile against the tall pedestal, finishing their chat before entering the church for the evening prayer.

The "Etherials" of Padua constituted one of the innumerable "Academies" which existed at that day and for a couple of centuries subsequently in every one of the hundred cities of Italy. The "Arcadian" craze was the generating cause of all of them. All the members were "shepherds;" all assumed a fancy name on becoming a member, by which they were known in literary circles; and every Academy printed all the rhymes its members strung together!

Those must have been pleasant days in old Padua, before the young Professor returned to his work in the neighbouring university of Ferrara. The two young men were then, and for some time afterwards, loving friends; for they had not yet become rival poets.

At the end of those ten years of university life he

may be said to have entered on a new existence—to have begun life afresh—so entirely dissevered was his old life from the new that then opened on him. Alphonso II., who had succeeded his father, Hercules II., as Duke of Ferrara in 1559, "called him to the court" in 1567, and he began life as a courtier, or a "servant" of the Duke, in the language of the country and time.

Well, in 1567 he entered into the service of the Duke, his sovereign, and never had another happy or contented hour!

The first service on which the Duke employed him, and for the performance of which he seems specially to have taken him from his professional chair, was an embassy to Venice, to congratulate the new Doge, Pietro Loredano, on his elevation to the ducal throne, to which he had been elected on the previous 19th of June. On this occasion the Professor was created Cavaliere, a title to which his landed estate of Guarina, so called from the ancestor on whom it had been originally bestowed by a former duke, fairly entitled him.

Shortly afterwards he was sent as ambassador to the Court of Turin; and then to that of the Emperor Maximilian at Innspruck. Then he was twice sent to

Poland; the first time on the occasion of the election of Henry the Third of France to the throne of that kingdom; and the second time when Henry quitted it to ascend that of France on the death of his brother Charles IX. The object of this second embassy was to intrigue for the election to the Polish crown of Alphonso. But, as it is hardly necessary to say, his mission was unsuccessful.

It seems, too, to have been well-nigh fatal to the ambassador. There is extant a letter written from Warsaw to his wife, which gives a curious and interesting account of the sufferings he endured on the journey and at the place of his destination. He tells his wife not to be discontented that his silence has been so long, but to be thankful that it was not eternal, as it was very near being! "I started, as you know, more in the fashion of a courier than of an ambassador. And that would have been more tolerable if bodily fatigue had been all. But the same hand that had to flog the horses by day, had to hold the pen by night. Nature could not bear up against this double labour of body and mind; especially after I had travelled by Serravelles and Ampez,* which is

* The now celebrated Pass of the Ampezzo between Venice and Innspruck.

more disagreeable and difficult than I can tell you, from the ruggedness no less of the country than of the people, from the scarcity of horses, the miserable mode of living, and the want of every necessary. So much so that on reaching Hala* I had a violent fever. I embarked, however, for Vienna notwithstanding. What with fever, discouragement, an intense thirst, scarcity of remedies and of medical assistance, bad lodging, generally far to seek, † and often infected with disease, food disgusting, even to persons in health, bed where you are smothered in feathers—in a word, none of the necessaries or comforts of life! I leave you to imagine what I have suffered. The evil increased; my strength grew less. I lost my appetite for everything save wine. In a word, little hope remained to me of life, and that little was odious to me. There is on the Danube, which I was navigating, a vast whirlpool, so rapid that if the boatmen did not avail themselves of the assistance of a great number of men belonging to the locality, strong and powerful and well acquainted with,

* This must probably be Hall on the Inn, a little below Innspruck. Certainly any boat which he got there for the descent of the river must have been a sufficiently miserable mode of travelling.

† Far, that is, from the bank of the river, where he left his boat at night.

the danger, who are there constantly for the purpose and who struggle with their oars against the rapacious gulf, there is not a vessel in that great river which would not be engulfed! The place is worthy of the name of 'The Door of Death,' which, with a notoriety of evil fame, it has gained for itself. There is no passenger so bold as not to pass that bit of the course of the river on foot; for the thing is truly formidable and terrible. But I was so overcome by illness, that having lost all sense of danger or desire to live, I did not care to leave the boat, but remained in it, with those strong men, I hardly know whether to say stupidly or intrepidly—but I will say intrepidly, since at one point, where I was within an ace of destruction, I felt no fear."

He goes on to tell how at Vienna a physician treated him amiss, and made him worse; how every kind of consideration, and his own desire to save his life, counselled him to delay there; but how the honour, the responsibility of the embassy wholly on his shoulders, his duty to his sovereign prevailed to drive him onwards. He feared, too, lest it should be supposed at Warsaw that he preferred his life to the business on which he came, an accusation which might have been made use of by suspicious

and malignant adversaries to deprive him of all the credit of his labours, and "to snatch from my Prince the crown which we are striving to place on his head. It is impossible to imagine," he continues, "what I suffered in that journey of more than six hundred miles from Vienna to Warsaw, dragged rather than carried in carts, broken and knocked to pieces. I wonder that I am still alive! The obstinate fever, the want of rest, of food, and of medicine, the excessive cold, the infinite hardships, the uninhabited deserts, were killing me. More often than not it was a much lesser evil to crouch by night in the cart, which dislocated my bones by day, rather than to be suffocated in the foulness of those dens, or stables rather, where the dogs and the cats, the cocks and hens, and the geese, the pigs and the calves, and sometimes the children, kept me waking."

He proceeds to tell how the country was overrun, in that time of interregnum, by lawless bands of Cossacks; how he was obliged to travel with a strong escort, but nevertheless was obliged several times to deviate from the direct road to avoid the Cossacks, but on two occasions had very narrow escapes from falling into their hands. When he

reached Warsaw at last, more dead than alive, the only improvement of his position was that he was stationary instead of in motion. "The cart no more lacerates my limbs!" But there was no rest to be got. "The place, the season, the food, the drink, the water, the servants, the medicines, the doctors, mental trouble, and a thousand other ills make up my torment. Figure to yourself all the kingdom lodged in one little town, and my room in the midst of it! There is no place from the top to the bottom, on the right or on the left, by day or by night, that is not full of tumult and noise. There is no special time here destined for business. Negotiation is going on always, because drinking is going on always; and business is dry work without wine. When business is over, visits begin; and when these are at an end, drums, trumpets, bombs, uproar, cries, quarrels, fighting, split one's head in a manner piteous to think of. Ah! if I suffered all this labour and this torment for the love and the glory of God, I should be a martyr!" (One thinks of Wolsey!) "But is he not worthy of the name who serves without hope of recompense?"

He concludes his letter, bidding his wife not to weep for him, but to live and care for her children,

in a manner which indicates that he had even then but little hope of returning alive.

We are nevertheless assured by his biographers that he acquitted himself upon all these occasions in such sort as to give satisfaction to his sovereign and to acquire for himself the reputation of an upright and able minister. The Italian practice of entrusting embassies especially to men of letters, which we first had occasion to note when tracing the vicissitudes of the life of Dante in the thirteenth century, which we saw subsequently exemplified in the cases of Petrarch, Boccaccio, and Ariosto, and which might be further exemplified in the persons of many other Italian scholars and men of letters, still, as we see, prevailed in the sixteenth century, and continued to do so for some little time longer.

But in no one instance of all those I have mentioned, does the poet thus employed in functions which in other lands and other times have usually led to honours and abundant recognition of a more solid kind, appear to have reaped any advantage in return for the service performed, or to have been otherwise than dissatisfied and discontented with the treatment accorded to him.

It would have been very interesting to learn

somewhat of the impression made upon an Italian scholar of the sixteenth century by the places visited, and persons with whom he must have come in contact in those transalpine lands, which were then so far off, so contrasted in all respects with the home-scenes among which his life had been passed in the low-lying, fat, and fertile valley of the Po. Of all this his various biographers and contemporaries tell us no word! But there is a volume of his letters, a little square quarto volume, now somewhat rare, printed at Venice in the year 1595.* These letters have somewhat unaccountably not been included in any of the editions of his works, and they are but little known. But turning to this little volume, and looking over the dates of the letters (many of them, however, are undated), I found three written "Di Spruch," and eagerly turned to them, thinking that I should certainly find there what I was seeking. The letters belong to a later period of Guarini's life, having been written in 1592, when he was again sent on an embassy to the German

* Lettere del Signor Cavaliere Battista Guarini, Nobile Ferrarese, di nuovo in questa seconda impressione di alcune altre accresciute, e dall' Autore stesso corrette, di Agostino Michele raccolte, et al Sereniss. Signore il Duca d'Urbino dedicate. Con Privilegio. In Venetia, MDXCV. Appresso Gio. Battista Ciotti Senese al segno della Minerva.

Emperor. This circumstance, however, is of no importance as regards the purpose for which I wanted the letters. I was disappointed. But I must nevertheless give one of the letters, not wantonly to compel my reader to share my disappointment, but because it is a curiosity in its way. The person to whom he writes is a lady, the Contessa Pia di Sala, with whom he was evidently intimate. He is at Innspruck at the Court of the Emperor Maximilian. The lady is at Mantua, and this is what he writes to her:

"DI SPRUCH, *Nov.* 29, 1592.

"The letter of your illustrious ladyship, together with which you send me that of your most excellent brother, written at the end of August, reached me yesterday, at first to my very great anger at having been for so long a time deprived of so precious a thing, while I appeared in fault towards so distinguished a lady; but finally to my very great good fortune. For if a letter written by the most lovely flame* in the world had arrived while the skies were burning, what would have become of me, when, now that winter is beginning, I can scarcely prevent myself from falling into ashes? And in truth, when I think that those so courteous thoughts come from the mind which informs so lovely a person, that those characters have been traced by a hand of such excellent beauty, I am all ablaze, no less than if the paper were fire, the words flames, and all the syllables sparks. But God

* I translate literally. Old-fashioned people will remember a somewhat similar use of the word "flame" in English.

grant that, while I am set on fire by the letter of your illustrious ladyship, you may not be inflamed by anger against me, from thinking that the terms in which I write are too bold. Have no such doubt, my honoured mistress! I want nothing from the flaming of my letter, but to have made by the light of it more vivid and more brilliant in you, the natural purity of your beautiful face, even as it seems to me that I can see it at this distance. My love is nothing else save honour; my flame is reverence; my fire is ardent desire to serve you. And only so long will the appointment in his service, which it has pleased my Lord His Serene Highness the Duke of Mantua to give me, and on which your illustrious ladyship has been kind enough to congratulate me so cordially, be dear to me, as you shall know that I am fit for it, and more worthy and more ready to receive the favour of your commands, which will always be to me a most sure testimony that you esteem me, not for my own worth, as you too courteously say, but for the worth which you confer on me, since I am not worthy of such esteem for any other merit than that which comes to me from being honoured by so noble and beautiful a lady. I kiss the hand of your illustrious ladyship, wishing the culmination of every felicity."

Now, this letter I consider a very great curiosity. The other two written from the same place, one to a Signor Bulgarini at Siena, the other to a lady, the Marchesa di Grana, at Mantua, are of an entirely similar description. I turned to them in the hope of finding how Innspruck, its stupendous scenery, its court, its manners so widely different from those to which the writer and his correspondents were used,

its streets, its people, impressed a sixteenth-century Italian from the valley of the Po. I find instead a psychological phenomenon. The writer is a grave, austere man (Guarini was notably such), celebrated throughout Italy for his intellectual attainments, in the fifty-seventh year of his age, with a wife and family; he is amidst scenes which must, one would have thought, have impressed in the very highest degree the imagination of the poet, and must, it might have been supposed, have interested those he was writing to in an only somewhat less degree, and he writes the stuff the reader has just waded through! It is clear that this Italian sixteenth-century scholar, poet and of cultivated intellect as he was, saw nothing amid the strange scenes to which a hard and irksome duty called him, which he thought worthy of being mentioned even by a passing word to his friends! Surely this is a curious trait of national character.

He remained in the service of the court for fourteen years, employed mainly, as it should seem, in a variety of embassies; an employment which seems to have left him a disappointed, soured, and embittered man. He considered that he had not been remunerated as his labour deserved, that the heavy expenses to which he had been put in his long

journeys had not been satisfactorily made up to him, and that he had not been treated in any of the foreign countries to which his embassies had carried him with the respect due to his own character and to his office.

He determined therefore to leave the court and retire to Padua, a residence in which city, it being not far distant from his estate of Guarina, would offer him, he thought, a convenient opportunity of overlooking his property and restoring order to his finances, which had suffered much during his travels. This was in the year 1582, when Guarina was in the forty-fifth year of his age. It is not clear, however, that this retirement was wholly spontaneous; and the probability is that the Duke and his ambassador were equally out of humour with each other. And it is probable that the faults were not all on the side of the Duke. There is sufficient evidence that the author of the "Pastor Fido" must have been a difficult man to live with.

The old friendship of happier days with Tasso had not survived the wear and tear of life at court. It was known that they no longer saw or spoke with each other. And everybody—if not of their contemporaries, at least of subsequent writers—jumped to the con-

clusion that the writer of the "Aminta" and the writer of the "Pastor Fido" must be jealous of each other. Jealousy there certainly was. But some frailer and more mortal female than the Muse was the cause of it. The Abate Serassi in his life of Tasso admits that Tasso first gave offence to Guarini by a sonnet in which he endeavoured to alienate the affections of a lady from him, by representing him as a faithless and fickle lover. The lines in which Tasso attacked his brother-poet are, it must be admitted, sharp enough:

> Si muove e si raggira
> Instabil più che arida fronde ai venti;
> Nulla fè, null' amor, falsi i tormenti
> Sono, e falso l'affetto ond' ei sospira.
> Insidioso amante, ama e disprezza
> Quasi in un punto, e trionfando spiega
> Di femminile spoglie empi trofei.* . . .

The attack was savage enough, it must be admitted, and well calculated to leave a lasting wound.

* I subjoin a literal prose translation in preference to borrowing a rhymed one from any of Tasso's translators. This fellow flits "and circles around more unstable than dry leaves in the wind. Without faith, without love, false are his pretended torments, and false the affection which prompts his sighs. A traitorous lover, he loves and despises almost at the same moment, and in triumph displays the spoils of women as impious trophies."

Guarini immediately answered the cruel sonnet by another, the comparative weakness of which is undeniable:

> . Questi che indarno ad alta mira aspira
> Con altrui biasmi, e con bugiardi accenti,
> Vedi come in se stesso arruota i denti,
> Mentre contra ragion meco s' adira.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Di due fiamme si vanta, e stringe e spezza
> Più volte un nodo ; e con quest' arti piega
> (Chi 'l crederebbe !) a suo favore i Dei*. . . .

There is reason to think that the accusation of many times binding and loosing the same knot, may have hit home. The sneer about bending the gods to favour him, alludes to Tasso's favour at court, then in the ascendant, and may well have been as offensive to the Duke and the ladies of his court as to the object of his satire. Both angry poets show themselves somewhat earth-stained members of the Paduan "Etherials." But the sequel of the estrangement was all in favour of the greater bard. Tasso, in desiring a friend to show his poems in manuscript to certain friends, two

* "See how this fellow, who in vain aims at a lofty goal, by blaming others, and by lying accents, sharpens against himself his teeth, while without reason he is enraged with me. . . . Of two flames he boasts, and ties and breaks over and over again the same knot; and by these arts (who would believe it !) bends in his favour the gods !" . . .

or three in number, on whose opinion he set a high value, named Guarini among the number. And upon another occasion, wishing to have Guarini's opinion as to the best of two proposed methods of terminating a sonnet, and not venturing to communicate directly with him, he employed a common friend to obtain his brother-poet's criticism. Tasso had also in his dialogue entitled the "Messagero" given public testimony to Guarini's high intellectual and civil merits. But Guarini appears never to have forgiven the offence. He never once went to see Tasso in his miserable confinement in the hospital of St. Anne; nor, as has been seen, would hold any communication with him.

He must have been a stern and unforgiving man. And indeed all the available testimony represents him as having been so—upright, honest, and honourable, but haughty, punctilious, litigious, quick to take offence, slow to forget or forgive it, and cursed with a thin-skinned *amour propre* easily wounded and propense to credit others with the intention of wounding where no such intention existed. The remainder of the story of his life offers an almost unbroken series of testimonies to the truth of such an estimate of his character.

It was after fourteen years' service in the Court of Duke Alphonso, as has been said, that he retired disgusted and weary to live in independence and nurse his estate in the neighbourhood of Padua. But the part of Cincinnatus is not for every man! It was in 1582 that he retired from the court, intending to bid it and its splendours, its disappointments and its jealousies, an eternal adieu. In 1585, on an offer from the Duke to make him his secretary, he returned and put himself into harness again!

But this second attempt to submit himself to the service, to the caprices and exigencies of a master and of a court, ended in a quicker and more damaging catastrophe than the first. In a diary kept by the poet's nephew, Marcantonio Guarini, under the date of July 13th, 1587, we find it written that "the Cavalier Batista Guarini, Secretary of the Duke, considering that his services did not meet with sufficient consideration in proportion to his worth, released himself from that servitude." The phrase here translated "released himself" is a peculiar one—*si licenzio*—"dismissed himself." To receive *licenza*, or to be *licenziato*, is to be dismissed, or at least parted with in accordance with the will of the employer. But the phrase used by the diarist seems intended to express

exactly what happened when the poet, once more discontented, took himself off from Ferrara and its Duke. He seems to have done so in a manner which gave deep and lasting offence. In a subsequent passage of the above-quoted diary we read, "the Cavaliere Batista Guarini, having absented himself from Ferrara, disgusted with the Duke, betook himself to Florence, and then, by the intermedium of Guido Coccapani the agent, asked for his dismissal in form and obtained it." We happen, however, to have a letter written by this Coccapani, who seems to have been the Duke's private secretary and managing man, in which he gives his version of the matter. He was "stupefied," he says, "when he received the extravagant letter of the Cavaliere Guarini, and began to think that it would be with him as it had been with Tasso," who by that time had fallen into disgrace. There is reason to think that he left Ferrara secretly, without taking leave of the Duke or letting anybody at court know where he had gone. He did, however, obtain his formal dismissal, as has been said, but the Duke by no means forgave him.

Though it would appear that on leaving Ferrara in this irregular manner he went in the first instance to Florence, it seems that he had had hopes given him

of a comfortable position and honourable provision at Turin. He was to have been made a Counsellor of State, and entrusted with the task of remodelling the course of study at the university, with a stipend of six hundred crowns annually. But on arriving at Turin he found difficulties in the way. In fact, the angry Duke of Ferrara had used his influence with the Duke of Savoy to prevent anything being done for his contumacious Secretary of State. Guarini, extremely mortified, had to leave Turin, and betook himself to Venice.

His adventure, however, was of a nature to cause great scandal in that clime and time. As usual, the Italians were offended at the "imprudence" of which Guarini's temper had led him to be guilty, more than they would have been by many a fault which among ourselves would be deemed a very much worse one. A violence of temper or indignation shown in such a manner as to injure *one's own* interests is, and in a yet greater degree was, a spectacle extremely disgusting to Italian moral sentiment.

The outcry against Guarini on this occasion was so great that he found himself obliged to put forth an exculpatory statement.

"If human actions, my most kind readers," he begins, "always bore marked on the front of them the aims and motives which have produced them, or if those who talk about them were always well informed enough to be able to judge of them without injury to the persons of whom they speak, I should not be compelled, at my age, and after so many years of a life led in the eyes of the world, and often busied in defending the honour of others, to defend this day my own, which has always been dearer to me than my life. Having heard, then, that my having left the service of His Serene Highness the Duke of Ferrara and entered that of the Duke of Savoy has given occasion to some persons, ignorant probably of the real state of the case, to make various remarks, and form various opinions, I have determined to publish the truth, and at the same time to declare my own sentiments in the matter.

"I declare, then, that previously to my said departure I consigned to the proper person everything, small as it was, which was in my hands regarding my office, which had always been exercised by me uprightly and without any other object in view than the service of my sovereign and the public welfare.

Further, that I, by a written paper under my own hand (as the press of time and my need rendered necessary), requested a free and decorous dismissal from the Duke in question, and also, that I set forth in all humility the causes which led me to that determination; and I added (some of the circumstances in which I was compelling me to do so) that if His Serene Highness did not please to give me any other answer, I would take his silence as a consent to my request of dismissal. I declare further that the paper was delivered to the principal Minister of His Serene Highness, and lastly, that my salary was, without any further communication with me, stopped, and cancelled from the roll of payments. And as this is the truth, so it is equally true that my appointment as reformer of the University of Turin, and Counsellor of State, with six hundred crowns yearly, was settled and concluded with His Serene Highness the Duke of Savoy, and that I declined to bind myself, and did not bind myself, to ask any other dismissal from His Serene Highness the Duke of Ferrara than that of which I have already spoken. And, finally, it is true that, as I should not have gone to Turin if I had not been engaged for that service and invited thither, so I should not have left, or wished to leave,

this place,* had I not known that I received my dismissal in the manner above related. Now, as to the cause which may have retarded and may still retard the fulfilment of the engagement above-mentioned, I have neither object, nor obligation, nor need to declare it. Suffice it that it is not retarded by any fault of mine, or difficulty on my side. In justification of which I offered myself, and by these presents now again offer myself, to present myself wheresoever, whensoever, and in whatsoever manner, and under whatsoever conditions and penalties, as may be seen more clearly set forth in the instrument of agreement sent by me to His Highness. From all which, I would have the world to know, while these affairs of mine are still in suspension, that I am a man of honour, and am always ready to maintain the same in whatsoever manner may be fitting to my condition and duty. And as I do not at all doubt that some decision of some kind not unworthy of so just and so magnanimous a prince will be forthcoming; so, let it be what it may, it will be received by me with composure and contentment; since, by God's grace, and

* It is odd that he should so write in a paper dated, as the present is, from Venice. I suppose the expression came from his feeling that he was addressing persons at Ferrara.

that of the serene and exalted power under the most just and happy dominion of which I am now living, and whose subject, if not by birth, yet by origin and family, I am,* I have a comfortable and an honoured existence. And may you, my honoured readers, live in happiness and contentment. Venice, February 1st, 1589."

We must, I think, nevertheless be permitted to doubt the contentment and happiness of the life he led, as it should seem, for the next four years, at Venice. No such decision of any kind, as he hoped from the Duke of Savoy, was forthcoming. He was shunted! He had quarrelled with his own sovereign, and evidently the other would have none of him. The Italians of one city were in those days to a wonderful degree foreigners in another ruled by a different government; and there can be little doubt that Guarini wandered among the quays and "calle" of Venice, or paced the great piazza at the evening hour, a moody and discontented man!

At last, after nearly four years of this sad life, there came an invitation from the Duke of Mantua proposing that Guarini should come to Mantua

* Seeing that, as has been said, his ancestors were of Verona, which belonged to Venice.

together with his son Alessandro, to occupy honourable positions in that court. The poet, heartily sick of "retirement," accepted at once, and went to Mantua. But there, too, another disappointment awaited him. The "magnanimous" Duke Alphonso would not tolerate that the man who had so cavalierly left his service should find employment elsewhere. It is probable that this position was obtained for him by the influence of his old friend and fellow-member of the "Etherials" at Padua, Scipione Gonzaga; and it would seem that he occupied it for awhile, and went on behalf of the Duke of Mantua to Innspruck, whence he wrote the wonderful letters which have been quoted.

The Cardinal's influence, however, was not strong enough to prevail against the spite of a neighbouring sovereign. There are two letters extant from the Duke, or his private secretary, to that same Coccapani whom we saw so scandalised at Guarini's hurried and informal departure from Ferrara, and who was residing as Alphonso's representative at Mantua, in which the Minister is instructed to represent to the Duke of Mantua that his brother of Ferrara "did not think it well that the former should take any of the Guarini family into his service, and when they

should see each other he would tell him his reasons. For the present he would only say that he wished the Duke to know that it would be excessively pleasing to him if the Duke would have nothing to say to any of them."

This was in 1593; and the world-weary poet found himself at fifty-six once again cast adrift upon the world. The extremity of his disgust and weariness of all things may be measured by the nature of the next step he took. He conceived, says his biographer Barotti, that "God called him by internal voices, and by promises of a more tranquil life, to accept the tonsure." His wife had died some little time before; and it was therefore open to him to do so. He went to Rome accordingly for the purpose of there taking orders. But during the short delay which intervened between the manifestation of his purpose and the fulfilment of it, news reached him that his friend and protectress the Duchess of Urbino, Alphonso's sister, had interceded for him with the Duke, and that he was forgiven! It was open to him to return to his former employment! And no sooner did the news reach him than he perceived that "the internal voices" were altogether a mistake. God had never called him at all, and

Alphonso had! All thoughts of the Church were abandoned on the instant, and he hastened to Ferrara, arriving there on the 15th of April, 1595.

But neither on this occasion was he destined to find the tranquillity which he seemed fated never to attain! And this time the break-up was a greater and more final one than the last. Duke Alphonso died in 1597; and the Pontifical Court, which had long had its eye on the possibility of enforcing certain pretended claims to the Duchy of Ferrara, found the means, at Alphonso's death, of ousting his successor, the Duke Cesare, who remained thenceforward Duke of Modena only, but no longer of Ferrara.

Guarini was once more adrift! Nor were the political changes in Ferrara the only thing which rendered the place no longer a home for him. Other misfortunes combined to render a residence in the city odious to him. His daughter Anna had married a noble gentleman of Ferrara, the Count Ercole Trotti, by whom she was on the 3rd of May, 1598, murdered at his villa of Zanzalino near Ferrara. Some attempt was made to assert that the husband had reason to suspect that his wife was plotting against his life. But there seems to have been no foundation for any accusation of the sort; and the

crime was prompted probably by jealousy. Guarini, always on bad terms with his sons, and constantly involved in litigation with them, as he had been with his father, was exceedingly attached to this unfortunate daughter.

But even this terrible loss was not the only bitterness which resulted from this crime. Guarini composed a long Latin epitaph, in which he strongly affirms her absolute innocence of everything that had been laid to her charge, and speaks with reprobation of the husband's* crime. But scarcely had the stone bearing the inscription been erected than the indignant father was required by the authorities of the city to remove it. A declaration, which he published on the subject, dated June 15th, 1598, is still extant. "On that day," he writes, "the Vice-legate of Ferrara spoke with me, in the name of the Holy Father, as to the removing of the epitaph written by me on Anna my daughter in the church of Sta. Catherina. He said that there were things in it that might provoke other persons to resentment, and occasion much scandal; and that, besides that, there were in the inscription words of Sacred Scripture, which ought not to be

* Barotti gives it at length; but it is hardly worth while to occupy space by reproducing it here.

used in such a place. I defended my cause, and transmitted a memorial to his Holiness, having good reason to know that these objections were the mere malignity of those who favour the opposite party, and of those who caused the death of my innocent child. But at last, on the 22nd, I caused the epitaph to be removed, intimating that it was my intention to take up the body, and inter it elsewhere. On which it is worthy of remark, that having made my demand to that effect, I was forbidden to do so." He further adds: "Note! news was brought to me here that my son Girolamo, who was evidently discovered to be the accomplice, and principal atrocious author of the death of his sister Anna, received from the Potestà of Rovigo license to come into the Polisina with twelve men armed with arquebuses."

All this is very sad; and whether these terrible suspicions may or may not have had any foundation other than the envenomed temper generated by the family litigations, it must equally have had the effect of making the life of Guarini a very miserable one, and contributing to his determination to abandon finally his native city.

More surprising is it that, after so many disgusts and disappointments, he should once again have been

tempted to seek, what he had never yet been able to find there, in a court. In a letter written in November, 1598, he informs the Duke Cesare (Duke of Modena, though no longer of Ferrara) that the Grand Duke of Florence had offered him a position at Florence. And his Serene Highness, more kindly and forgiving than the late Duke, wrote him an obliging and congratulatory letter in the following month.

At Florence everything at first seemed to be going well with him, and he seemed to stand high in favour with the Grand Duke Ferdinand. But very shortly he quitted Florence in anger and disgust on the discovery of the secret marriage of his third son, Guarini, with a woman of low condition at Pisa, with at least the connivance, as the poet thought, whether justly or not there is nothing to show, of the Grand Duke.

After that his old friend the Duchess of Urbino once again stood his friend, and he obtained a position in the Court of Urbino, then one of the most widely famed centres of cultivation and letters in Italy. And for awhile everything seemed at last to be well with him there. On the 23rd of February, 1603, he writes to his sister, who apparently had been pressing him to come home to Ferrara: "I should like to come

home, my sister. I have great need and a great desire for home; but I am treated so well here, and with so much distinction and so much kindness, that I cannot come. I must tell you that all expenses for myself and my servants are supplied, so that I have not to spend a farthing for anything in the world that I need. The orders are that anything I ask for should be furnished to me. Besides all which, they give me three hundred crowns a year; so that, what with money and expenses, the position is worth six hundred crowns a year to me. You may judge, then, if I can throw it up. May God grant you every happiness!—Your brother, B. GUARINI."

But all would not do. He had been but a very little time in this little Umbrian Athens among the Apennines before he once again threw up his position in anger and disgust, because he did not obtain all the marks of distinction to which he thought that he was entitled. This was in 1603. He was now sixty-six, and seems at length to have made no further attempt to haunt a court. Once again he was at Rome in 1605, having undertaken, at the request of the citizens of Ferrara, to carry their felicitations to the new Pope, Paul the Fifth. And with the exception

of that short expedition his last years were spent in the retirement of his ancestral estate of Guarina.

The property is situated in the district of Lendinara, on the fat and fertile low-lying region between Rovigo and Padua, and belongs to the commune—parish, as we should say—of St. Bellino. The house, dating probably from the latter part of the fifteenth century, is not much more than a hundred yards or so from the *piazza* of the village, which boasts two thousand inhabitants. The road between the two is bordered with trees. The whole district is as flat as a billiard table, and as prosaical in its well-to-do fertility as can be imagined. It is intersected by a variety of streams, natural and artificial. About a couple of miles from the house to the south is the Canalbianco; and a little farther to the north the Adigetto. To the east runs the Scortico. St. Bellino, from whom the village is named, was, it seems, enrolled among the martyrs by Pope Eugenius the Third in 1152. He has a great specialty for curing the bite of mad dogs. There is a grand cenotaph in his honour in the village church, which was raised by some of the Guarini family. But this, too, like all else, became a

subject of trouble and litigation to our poet. A certain Baldassare Bonifaccio of Rovigo wanted to transport the saint to that city. Guarini would not hear of this; litigated the matter before the tribunals of Venice, and prevailed. So the saint still resides at St. Bellino, to the comfort of all those bitten by mad dogs in those parts. The house and estate have passed through several hands since that time; but a number of old family portraits may still be seen on the walls, together with the family arms, and the motto, "Fortis est in asperis non turbari." The armchair and writing-table of the poet are also still preserved in the house, and a fig-tree is pointed out close by it, under the shade of which the poet, as tradition tells, wrote on that table and in that chair his "Pastor Fido." There is an inscription on the chair as follows: "Guarin sedendo qui cantò, che vale al paragon seggio* reale."

It was not, however, during this his last residence here that the "Pastor Fido" was written, but long previously. It was doubtless his habit to escape from the cares of official life in Ferrara from time

* "Guarini, sitting here, sang, that which renders the seat the equal of a royal throne."

to time as he could; and it must have been in such moments that the celebrated pastoral was written.*

The idea of a scholar and a poet, full of years and honours, passing the quiet evening of his life in a tranquil retirement in his own house on his own land, is a pleasing one. But it is to be feared that in the case of the author of the "Pastor Fido" it would be a fallacious one. Guarini would not have come to live on his estate if he could have lived contentedly in any city. We may picture him to ourselves sitting under his fig-tree, or pacing at evening under the trees of the straight avenue between his house and the village, or on the banks of one of the sluggish streams slowly finding their way through the flat fields towards the Po; but I am afraid the picture must be of one "remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow," with eyes bent earthwards, and discontented mind: "remote," because to the Italian mind all places beyond the easy reach of a city are so; "unfriended," because he had

* It is very doubtful and very difficult to determine at what period of his life the "Pastor Fido" was written. Ginguené (*Hist. Ital. Lit.*, part ii. ch. xxv.) has sufficiently shown that the statements of the Italian biographers on this point are inaccurate. Probably it was planned and, in part, written many years before it was finished. It was first printed in 1590.

quarrelled with everybody; "melancholy," because all had gone amiss with him, and his life had been a failure; "slow," because no spring of hope in the mind gave any elasticity to his step.

One other "haunt" of the aged poet must, however, be mentioned, because it is a very characteristic one. During this last residence at Guarina, he hired an apartment at Ferrara, selecting it in a crowded part of the centre of the city, especially frequented by the lawyers, that he might be in the midst of them, when he went into the city on the various business connected with his interminable lawsuits. The most crowded part of the heart of the city of Ferrara! It would be difficult to find any such part now. But the picture offered to the imagination, of the aged poet, professor, courtier, haunting the courts, the lawyers' chambers, leaving his, at least, tranquil retreat at St. Bellino, to drag weary feet through the lanes of the city in which he had in earlier days played so different a part, is a sad one. But there are people who like contention so much that such work is a labour of love to them. And certainly, if the inference may be drawn from the fact of his never having been free from lawsuits in one quarrel or another, Guarini must have been

one of these. But it is passing strange that the same man should have been the author of the "Pastor Fido."

They pursued him to the end, these litigations; or he pursued them! And at last he died, not at Guarina, but at Venice, on the 7th of October, 1612, where, characteristically enough, he chanced to be on the business connected with some lawsuit.

And now a few words must be said about his great work, the "Pastor Fido." It is one of the strangest things in the range of literary history that such a man should have written such a poem. He was, one would have said, the last man in the world to produce such a work. The first ten years of his working life were spent in the labour of a pedagogue; the rest of it in the inexpressibly dry, frivolous, and ungenial routine of a small Italian court, or in wandering from one to the other of them in the vain and always disappointed search for such employment. We are told that he was a punctilious, stiff, unbending, angular man; upright and honourable, but unforgiving and wont to nurse his enmities. He was soured, disappointed, discontented with everybody and everything, involved in litigation first with his father, and then with his own children.

And this was the man who wrote the "Pastor Fido," of all poems comparable to it in reputation the lightest, the airiest, and the most fantastic! The argument of it is as follows:

The Arcadians, suffering in various ways from the anger of Diana, were at last informed by the oracle that the evils which afflicted them would cease when a youth and a maiden, both descended from the Immortals, as it should seem the *crême de la crême* of Arcadian society mostly was, should be joined together in faithful love. Thereupon Montano, a priest of the goddess, who was descended from Hercules, arranged that his only son Silvio should be betrothed to Amaryllis, the only daughter of Tytirus, who was descended from Pan. The arrangement seemed all that could be desired, only that a difficulty arose from the fact that Silvio, whose sole passion was the chase, could not be brought to care the least in the world for Amaryllis. Meantime Mirtillo, the son, as was supposed, of the shepherd Carino, fell desperately in love with Amaryllis. She was equally attached to him, but dared not in the smallest degree confess her love, because the law of Arcadia would have punished with death her infidelity to her betrothed vows. A cetain Corisca, however,

who had conceived a violent but unrequited passion for Mirtillo, perceiving or guessing the love of Amaryllis for him, hating her accordingly, and hoping that, if she could be got out of the way, she might win Mirtillo's love, schemes by deceit and lies to induce Mirtillo and Amaryllis to enter together a cave, which they do in perfect innocence, and without any thought of harm. Then she contrives that they should be caught there, and denounced by a satyr; and Amaryllis is condemned to die. The law, however, permits that her life may be saved by any Arcadian who will voluntary die in her stead; and this Mirtillo determines to do, although he believes that Amaryllis cares nothing for him, and also is led by the false Corisca to believe that she had gone into the cave for the purpose of meeting with another lover. The duty of sacrificing him devolves on Montano the priest; and he is about to carry out the law, when Carino, who has been seeking his reputed son Mirtillo, comes in, and while attempting to make out that he is a foreigner, and therefore not capable of satisfying the law by his death, brings unwittingly to light circumstances that prove that he is in truth a son of Montano, and therefore a descendant of the god Hercules. It

thus appears that a marriage between Mirtillo and Amaryllis will exactly satisfy the conditions demanded by the oracle. There is an underplot, which consists in providing a lover and a marriage for the woman-hater Silvio. He is loved in vain by the nymph Dorinda, whom he unintentionally wounds with an arrow while out hunting. The pity he feels for her wound softens his heart towards her, and all parties are made happy by this second marriage.

Such is a skeleton of the story of the "Pastor Fido." It will be observed that there is more approach to a plot and to human interest than in any previous production of this kind, and some of the situations are well conceived for dramatic effect. And accordingly the success which it achieved was immediate and immense. Nor, much as the taste of the world has been changed since that day, has it ever lost its place in the estimation of cultivated Italians.

It would be wholly uninteresting to attempt any account of the wide-spreading literary controversies to which the publication of the "Pastor Fido" gave rise. The author terms it a tragi-comedy; and this title was violently attacked. The poet himself, as may well be imagined from the idiosyncrasy of the man, was not slow to reply to his critics, and did so

in two lengthy treatises, entitled, from the name of a contemporary celebrated actor, "Verato primo" and "Verato secondo," which are printed in the four-quarto-volume edition of his works, but which probably no mortal eye has read for the last two hundred years!

The question of the rivalry between the "Aminta" of Tasso and the "Pastor Fido" has an element of greater interest in it. It is certain that the former preceded the latter, and doubtless suggested it. It seems probable that Ginguené is right in his suggestion, that Guarini, fully conscious that no hope was open to him of rivalling his greater contemporary and townsman in epic poetry, strove to surpass him in pastoral. It must be admitted that he has at least equalled him. Yet, while it is impossible to deny that almost every page of the "Pastor Fido" indicates not so much plagiarism as an open and avowed purpose of doing the same thing better, if possible, than his rival has done it, the very diverse natural character of the two poets is also, at every page, curiously indicated. Specially the reader may be recommended to compare the passages in the two poems where Tasso under the name of Thyrsis, and Guarini under the name of Carino (Act v. Scene 1),

represent the sufferings both underwent at the Court of Alphonso II. The lines of Guarini are perhaps the most vigorous in their biting satire. But the gentler and nobler nature of Tasso is unmistakable.

It is strange that the Italian critics, who are for the most part so lenient to the licentiousness of most of the authors of this period, blame Guarini for the too great warmth, amounting to indecency, of his poem. The writer of his life in the French "Biographie Universelle" refers to certain scenes as highly indecent. I can only say that, on examining the passages indicated carefully, I could find no indecency at all. It is probable that the writer referred to had never read the pages in question. But it is odd that those whose criticism he is no doubt reflecting should have said so. No doubt there are passages, not those mentioned by the writer in the "Biographie," but for instance the first scene of the second act, when a young man in a female disguise is one among a party of girls, who propose a prize for her who can give to one of them, the judge, the sweetest kiss, which prize he wins, which might be deemed somewhat on the sunny side of the hedge that divides the permissible from the unpermissible. But in comparison with others of that age Guarini is pure as snow!

It has been said in speaking of the sad story of his daughter Anna, that she was accused of having given her husband cause for jealousy. It would seem very clear that there was no ground for any such accusation. But it was said that the misconduct on her part had been due to the corruption of her mind by the reading of her father's verses. The utter groundlessness of such an assertion might be shown in many ways. But the savage and malignant cruelty of it points with considerable evidence to the sources of the current talk about the courtier poet's licentiousness.

It is impossible to find room here for a detailed comparison between these two celebrated pastorals; and it is the less needed inasmuch as Ginguené has done it very completely and at great length in the twenty-fifth chapter of the second part of his work.

Guarini also produced a comedy, the "Idropica," which was acted with much success at the Court of Mantua, and is printed among his works, as well as some prose pieces of small importance, the principal of which is "Il Secretario," a treatise on the duties of a secretary, not printed among his works, but of which an edition exists in pot quarto (186 pages) printed at Venice in 1594. Neither have his letters

been printed among his works. They exist, printed without index or order of any kind, in a volume of the same size as the "Secretario," printed at Venice also in 1595, but by a different printer.

The name, however, of Batista Guarini would have long since been forgotten had he not written the "Pastor Fido."

TORQUATO TASSO.

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TORQUATO TASSO.

A CURVING line of deep blue waters, fringed with mild white foam, softly laves the foot of the cliffs on which Sorrento sits and smiles dreamily amid her orange groves in the dreamy, orange-scented air. Yonder, across the liquid plain, rises Capri. On the opposite side of the bay a tuft of vapour, white and soft as a plume, waves above Vesuvius' awful crest. The mountains behind Sorrento are furrowed with deep narrow gorges, down which many a torrent plunges toward the sea, overshadowed by luxuriant bowers of foliage, and sometimes murmuring a deep *bourdon* to the sound of voices chanting the litany of the Madonna in a wayside chapel, or the sharp jangle of bells that call to worship from some crumbling tower. Sails, white, brown, or red as autumn leaves,

are wafted over the wonderful turquoise-tinted Mediterranean that quivers under the sunlight with that exquisite *tremolar della marina* which greeted Dante's eyes when he issued from the *aura morta*—the dark, dead atmosphere of eternal gloom. Half-naked fishermen stretch their brown sun-baked limbs on the brown sun-baked shore. Soft island shapes swim on the sea-horizon veiled in silver haze, and, over all, the sky of Southern Italy spreads an intense delight, an ecstasy of blue!

Sky, sea, island, silvery vapour, shadowy gorge, and groves of burnished greenery studded with golden globes, are not different at this day from what they were when Tasso's eyes first opened on them more than three centuries ago. Nature here, like some Southern Circe, daughter of the Sun-god and a nymph of Ocean, smiles in eternal youth, and steals away the hearts of all men who behold her.

That sparkling sea, that crystal sky, those ever-green gardens, with their background of mountains, were familiar to the eyes of Torquato Tasso in his earliest years. He was born in Sorrento on the 11th day of March, 1544, a season when, in that southern, sheltered spot, the tepid air is full of perfume and all

the sweetness of the spring. Torquato's father was himself a poet of no mean fame—Bernardo Tasso, author amongst other things of a poem in one hundred cantos on the subject of Amadis of Gaul, which is his best-known work. Bernardo Tasso belonged to an ancient and noble family of Bergamo, where he himself was born; his wife, Porzia de' Rossi, was a Neapolitan of Pistojese lineage.

The instances are innumerable of the transplantation of Italian families from one part of the peninsula to another. From Dante to Guarini, the history of an Italian man of letters almost invariably includes a series of migrations from city to city and from court to court. And in that word "court" lies the explanation of most of the migrations. The numerous Italian potentates and princes, big and little (many of them very little, if their magnitude be measured by the size of the territory they ruled over!), vied with each other in "patronising" the Muses. And in order to do so efficaciously, it was, of course, necessary to bestow some patronage on the poets and artists whom the Muses deigned to inspire; those goddesses being, indeed, unpatronisable except by deputy! One may serve Calliope or Polyhymnia in one's own person, but one cannot patronise them save in somebody

else's! This being so, poets, philosophers, painters, sculptors, and such-like folks, were in great request amongst sovereign rulers, and wandered from court to court throughout the length and breadth of Italy, from Turin to Salerno, from the Mediterranean to the Adriatic shores. It is strange and somewhat sad to observe that the result of all this sovereign patronage, however agreeable and flattering it may have been to the Immortal Nine, was in nearly every case to embitter and oppress the souls of the patronised —Dante's fiery pride, Petrarch's lofty sweetness, Tasso's romantic enthusiasm, Guarini's worldly culture —none of these so widely different qualities of these so widely different men availed to mitigate the sorrow, disillusions, and mortifications to which the favour and familiarity of the great exposed them one and all. An irritable genus, these poets, truly! And we may believe that the sovereign patrons had their trials, too, of a serio-comic and not intolerable kind.

But neither for young Torquato nor for his parents had the inevitable time of sorrow and persecution arrived when he was staring with calm baby eyes at the blue gulf of Sorrento, or conning his first lessons

at his mother's knee upon the shores of exquisite Parthenope. He lived the first years of his life in Naples, amidst all the luxuriant images of natural beauty which abound there, and which, it cannot be doubted, made an ineffaceable impression on his tender mind. There is something pathetic as well as a little ludicrous in reading, on the authority of a grave and learned biographer, that at *three years old* Torquato was so passionately fond of study that he would willingly have passed his whole day in school had he been let to do so. He had a tutor, one Don Giovanni d'Angeluzzo, to whose care Bernardo confided him during an absence of the latter from Italy, and this tutor wrote to the absent father wondrous accounts of the child's genius and thirst for learning! Luckily for Torquato, he had a loving mother to prevent him from becoming an odious little prodigy of a pedant, and to keep the bloom of childhood from being quite rubbed off her tender little blossom by the zealous masculine manipulation of the learned Don Giovanni. How beloved this loving mother was by her boy, and how fondly and fervently he kept her memory in his heart, is proved by the following touching lines written years afterwards to record his

final parting with her, which took place when he was not yet ten years old :

> Me dal sen della madre empia fortuna
> Pargoletto divelse. Ah di que' baci,
> Ch'ella bagnò di lagrime dolenti,
> Con sospir mi rimembra, e degli ardenti
> Preghi che sen portar l'aure fugaci,
> Che io non dovea giunger più volto a volto
> Fra quelle braccia accolto
> Con nodi così stretti e si tenaci.
> Lasso! i' seguii con mal sicure piante,
> Qual Ascanio o Camilla, il padre errante.

Which may be faithfully, if roughly, translated as follows :

> Me from my mother's breast, a little child,
> Harsh fortune tore. Ah, of her kisses bathed
> In tears of sorrow, oft with sighs I dream,
> And of her ardent prayers, dispersed in air;
> For nevermore, ah ! never, face to face
> Within those arms was I to be enfolded
> In an embrace so clinging and so close.
> Alas! With childish footsteps insecure
> I followed, like Ascanius or Camilla,
> My wandering sire.

Yes, those years of happy study in the light of mother's eyes, and the warmth of mother's fond embraces, came to an untimely end. Little Torquato was really, it should seem, a wonderfully precocious

child, even when a due grain of salt is added to the statements on that head of his preceptors. He was sent before he had completed his fourth year to a school kept by certain Jesuit Fathers, who had then but newly, and with cautious modesty, set up a little church and schools in a somewhat obscure street of Naples, called Via del Gigante.* The Tassos then were inhabiting the Palazzo de' Gambacorti (an ancestral inheritance), and from the palace to the schools, the future singer of "Jerusalem Delivered" trotted daily in quest of knowledge. It is related that such was the child's passionate thirst for learning, that he often rose before daylight, impatient to be gone to his teachers; and that on more than one occasion his mother was constrained to send servants with lighted torches to accompany him through the still dark and silent city. The Jesuits were proud of their marvellous young pupil. With their accustomed acuteness of judgment, they doubtless perceived that here was a genius of no common sort; and it is pos-

* The above dates are given on the authority of Manso, a contemporary and friend of the poet; but Tiraboschi (*Lett. It.* vol. vii. book 3) observes that it is certainly ascertained that the Jesuits were not introduced into Naples before A.D. 1552, and that consequently Tasso must have been at least seven years old when he began to frequent their schools: a much more credible statement then Manso's.

sible that some among them may have looked forward to enlisting the fiery soul of Torquato under the banner of the militant company of Jesus. His confessor—the confessor of an infant of eight years old!—considered his intelligence and his behaviour sufficiently mature and serious to warrant his receiving the sacrament of the Holy Communion at that tender age. At seven he had "perfectly learned the Latin tongue, and was well advanced in Greek," and had composed and publicly recited orations in prose and several poems.

But now, as I have said, these pleasant days of study and love at home and praise abroad were to end for little Torquato, and in this way: His father, Bernardo, was the secretary and friend and faithful adherent of Ferrante Sanseverino, Prince of Salerno. Now, Don Pedro di Toledo, Viceroy of the Emperor Charles V. in Naples, desired to introduce into that city the tribunal of the Holy Inquisition, *all' uso di Spagna*, "after the custom of Spain," as one of his biographers says, and the city of Naples ungratefully opposed the bestowal of this blessing with might and main. So strong was the feeling of the Neapolitans in the matter, that they sent the Prince of Salerno to the Emperor as their ambassador, to plead with

his Majesty against the pious project of Toledo. Bernardo Tasso accompanied the prince his master on this embassy, which took place in the year 1547. It was successful; and the prince, on his return to Naples, was received with the utmost enthusiasm by his fellow-citizens, and with scarcely concealed hatred and spite by Toledo, who could not forgive him for having baulked his design. But Prince Ferrante's triumph was short-lived. Toledo filled the mind of Charles V. with suspicions and prejudices against his powerful subject; and possibly not the least efficacious of the viceroy's arguments was the possibility held out to Charles of reclaiming for the imperial crown the customs dues of Salerno, which had hitherto enriched the prince's revenue. We are not now concerned to follow the windings of this story of court treachery and tyranny, *all' uso di Spagna*; for our present purpose it suffices to say that the Prince of Salerno was driven from his country, and that Bernardo Tasso followed his master's fallen fortunes into France. On leaving Naples, where he left his wife, he took with him Torquato, who, incredible as it seems, is stated on grave authority to have been involved, child as he was, in the odium with which Toledo and his party covered the Prince of Salerno

and his adherents. In the year 1552 the said prince and all who had followed him were publicly declared to be rebels, and the sentence included Bernardo and Torquato Tasso.

The scene now changes for our young poet. His father carried him to Rome, and there left him under the charge of one Maurizio Cattaneo, whilst he, Bernardo, accompanied the Prince of Salerno to France. Cattaneo was a gentleman of Bergamo, long settled in Rome, where he enjoyed considerable favour at the Papal Court, and especially from the Cardinal Albani, whose secretary he was during many years. He was bound to the Tassos not only by ties of friendship but of some distant kindred, and he seems to have fulfilled his charge towards the boy with almost paternal affection. Torquato loved and honoured his memory all his life, and has dedicated one of his dialogues to him, giving it the name of "Cattaneo." Under this good man's care Torquato remained until he had completed his twelfth year. Meanwhile his only sister, Cornelia, who had remained with her mother at Naples, was married to a noble gentleman of Sorrento named Marzio Sersale; and very shortly after the marriage, her mother died. Bernardo felt his wife's loss deeply. They had been

a very affectionate and faithful couple, and Bernardo's grief was of course aggravated by his having been absent from Porzia in her last moments. In his sorrow and loneliness he resolved to send for Torquato to rejoin him. It must be explained that Bernardo Tasso, after his patron's final ruin, had returned from France to Italy, and taken refuge at the Court of Guglielmo Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua, who had invited him and received him very honourably. So, after some four years passed in the Eternal City, which years were chiefly spent in assiduous study, Torquato took leave of his kind preceptor, Maurizio Cattaneo, and departed for Mantua.

Among the most indelible impressions left on our poet by his stay in Rome, appears to have been that of a certain courtly and almost chivalrous tone of manners which is said to have distinguished Maurizio Cattaneo. The latter seems, too, to have concerned himself with the physical, as well as moral and mental, education of his pupil. Torquato was an adept in most of the knightly exercises of the day. When he rejoined his father at Mantua, he was tall for his years, handsome, and strong; and a prodigy of education according to the standard of the times, having fully completed a course of the Greek and Latin languages, rhetoric,

poetry, and logic. His father was, very naturally, filled with joy and pride at the boy's attainments, and although he had sent for him with the intention of keeping him as a companion in his widowed life, yet he shortly sent him to the University of Padua, there to pursue the study of the law, in company with Scipio Gonzaga (afterwards Cardinal), a kinsman of the reigning Duke of Mantua, and within a year or two of Torquato's own age. The two lads fell into a great friendship, lived during their student days in the closest intimacy, and preserved their mutual attachment through life. There, in the stately and learned city, Tasso passed five years of his existence, still so brief, but already chequered with many vicissitudes. Stately, sleepy old Padua, as it is now; with its great silent spaces which the sunshine reigns over victoriously; its narrower streets full of welcome shade in the spring and summer and autumn days; its wide picturesque piazza all ablaze on market-days with fruits and flowers, amongst which the vivid yellow flowers of the pumpkin burn like flames; its glimpses of red oleander blossoms and polished dark green foliage peeping over garden walls; its wide, silent, dreamy churches, and its haunting memories of a splendid past!

Padua was still splendid in the middle of the sixteenth century, when Torquato Tasso, and Scipio Gonzaga, and many another youth illustrious by birth or genius, paced its academic halls. Here Torquato, not yet turned seventeen, passed a public examination in canon and civil law, philosophy, and theology, "with universal eulogy and astonishment of that learned university," as a contemporary writer quaintly declares. But in the following year, when Torquato was but eighteen, the eulogy and astonishment were still further intensified by the publication of the heroic poem called "Rinaldo." It was, indeed, a marvellous production for a youth of his age, and, in the words of his friend and biographer Manso, a brilliant dawn which presaged the rising of that full sun of genius to be displayed later in the epic of "Jerusalem Delivered." The poem was dedicated to the Cardinal Luigi d'Este, brother of the reigning Duke Alfonso II., and published under the auspices of his Eminence. This was the first link in the chain which bound Tasso to the princely house of Este, to their glory and his sorrow as it proved. Bernardo, although naturally proud of his son's genius, seems to have looked with some discontent upon the lad's devotion to poetry. He himself was a poet, and the

Muse had not bettered his fortunes; and he had thought to give young Torquato a career which opened up a prospect of worldly success, riches, and a solid position—namely, the profession of the law. But let the good Bernardo rough-hew his ends as carefully as he might, the divinity called Poetry shaped them far otherwise than he intended. It is an old story. Boccaccio and Petrarch furnished examples of the imperious and irresistible force of inborn genius to break through any bonds of calculating prudence. And long before their time the Roman Ovid sang, undergoing the same struggle against parental authority:

> Nec me verbosas leges ediscere, nec me
> Ingrato vocem prostituisse foro,
> Mortale est quod quæris opus; mihi fama perennis
> Quæritur ut toto semper in orbe canar.

Tasso, like Ovid, chose "undying fame" rather than the weary but profitable labour of studying "verbose laws." The one languished in a horrible exile, the other was imprisoned as a maniac. Rarely does the implacable divinity confer her sovereign favours save in exchange for the very life-blood of her votaries; but perhaps even among the tragic annals of poets there is no record more steeped in sadness than that of the life of Torquato Tasso.

As yet, however, he is surrounded by the rosy light of the *lucente aurora*; youth and hope animated his breast, praise is meted to him in no stinted measure, friendship holds his hand in a firm, cordial grasp, and the clouds that are to darken the meridian and the evening of his days cast no shade upon the brightness of the morning.

So great was the reputation of the "Rinaldo" that the University of Bologna invited the youthful poet to visit that city, conveying the flattering request through Pier Donato Cesi, then vice-legate, and afterwards legate at Bologna, and Cardinal. Torquato went to Bologna and there pursued his studies, and even read and disputed publicly in the schools on various subjects, and especially on poetry. He is said to have been recalled thence at the instance of Scipio Gonzaga, at that time head of the Academy of the "Etherials" of Padua—one of the numberless institutions of the kind which sprang up in Italy in the sixteenth century. Scipio is said to have been jealous of Bologna's having possession of the rising genius instead of Padua; and moreover to have desired Tasso's return to the latter place from motives of personal attachment to him. Certain it is that Tasso did return to Padua, where he

was received with great honour by the "Etherials," amongst whom he assumed the name of "Pentito," or "The repenting one." This singular choice of an appellation is explained by Manso to mean that Tasso repented the time he had spent in the study of law. But Tiraboschi reveals a bit of secret history which Manso either did not know or chose to suppress, and which shows that vexations and mortifications were not spared to the young poet even in these early days of his fame. Tiraboschi possessed a long letter written by Tasso to the vice-legate Cesi, above-mentioned, from which it appears that the poet during his stay in Bologna was accused of being the author of certain libellous verses, and that his dwelling was consequently searched by the *birri* (officers of the law, in such evil repute that their title is a term of reproach in Italy to this day), and his books and papers carried off, and that this was the true cause of his quitting Bologna. Tasso indignantly defends himself against the charge, and complains with much spirit to the legate of the injurious treatment he suffered. "Why," says he among other things, "were the *birri* sent to my rooms on a slight and unreasonable suspicion, my companions insulted, my books taken away? Why

were so many spies set to work to find out where I went? Why have so many honourable gentlemen been examined in such a strange fashion? He demands, moreover, to be allowed to come to Bologna, and justify himself before some wise and impartial judge, "which, however," says Tiraboschi quietly, "does not appear to have been granted to him." The letter bears date the last day of February, 1564, and was written from Castelvetro, at that time a feudal tenure of the Counts Rangoni within the territory of Modena.

Tasso was thus within a few days of having completed his twentieth year when he left Bologna.

During his second sojourn in Padua he appears to have sketched out the first plan of his great epic, the "Jerusalem Delivered," which he intended from the first to dedicate to Duke Alfonso d'Este, sovereign of Ferrara. In the year 1565 he was formally invited by the Duke to take up his abode at the court of the latter. Chambers were provided for him in the ducal palace, "and all his wants so considered, as that he should be able at his leisure, and free from care, to serve the Muse both by contemplation and composition; the which, in truth he did, by proceeding with the poem of the

"Jerusalem Delivered," and writing those earlier rhymes and dialogues in prose which were the first to be beheld with eagerness and astonishment by the world." (Manso: *Life of Torquato Tasso.*)

If ever ghosts walked in the sunlight, I think they would choose the long, sunny, grass-grown, silent, slowly crumbling streets of Ferrara for such wanderings. The changes there for the last three centuries or so have been brought about, not so much by the advent of new things, as by the fading and decay of the old. Like an antique arras sorely preyed upon by moth and dust, Ferrara yet preserves a faint and colourless image of the olden time; and her aspect appeals to the fancy with all that pathos which belongs to things once stately and noble, now rotting in oblivion and decay. As Browning, in his poem entitled "A Toccata of Galuppi," speaks of the fair Venetian dames who used to listen to that quaint music, toying with a velvet mask or drinking in soft sounds of courtship covered by the tinkle of the harpsichord, and exclaims, with the sensitiveness of a poet:

> What's become of all the gold
> Used to fall and brush their bosoms?
> I feel chilly and grown old!

so one may feel chilly in the sunny streets of Ferrara, thinking of all those brave figures, shining with beauty, valour, splendour, and genius, which used to pace them, and have marched across the illuminated disc of this life into the fathomless shadow of the dread beyond.

Duke Hercules, the immediate predecessor of Tasso's patron, Alfonso II., had beautified and extended his city very greatly. In his time and under his auspices a whole new quarter sprang up, enclosed by an extended circuit of walls fortified according to the military science of that day. He caused a number of new streets to be planned, and compelled the monks of various religious houses, such, for example, as the Monastery of St. Catherine, of the Angels, and of the Carthusians, to sell or let on lease their lands which bordered on the new streets, in order to have stately mansions constructed on them. In this way, in the Via degli Angeli alone there arose four or five truly magnificent palaces, besides other handsome edifices; and of these palaces the visitor to Ferrara will probably remember most vividly the Palazzo de Diamanti, so called because the whole of its façade is covered with massive stonework, each block of which is cut in facets, like

the surface of a precious stone. This splendid building existed, then, in Tasso's time; but when he first saw it, it was not yet completed. It belonged to the Cardinal Luigi d'Este, to whom it had been bequeathed by Duke Hercules, together with a sum of money to finish it. And the Cardinal finished it accordingly in 1567—that is to say, two years after Tasso first went to reside at the Court of Ferrara. The city was then a brilliant scene, the resort of the most famous, talented, and illustrious Italians of the day. Beauty, rank, and genius figured on that stage. The first parts, the leading personages in the drama, were admirably filled; even tragic elements were not wanting to complete the interest and prevent any chance of a monotony of cheerfulness! A great poet suffering from hopeless love and forcibly imprisoned amongst maniacs. for instance, must have been a thrilling incident, As to the choral masses in the background—the crowd which figured in dumb show, the populace, in short—they suffered a good deal from pestilence and famine in those days; both which scourges fell, of course, more heavily on the poor than on the rich. But still it appears that Alfonso II. did his best for them according to his conceptions of his duty.

The population of the city, according to a census taken in 1592 by command of Pope Clement VIII. soon after the death of Duke Alfonso, amounted to 41,710 souls, *exclusive* of ecclesiastics, foreigners, and Jews; including those categories, it reached to over 50,000. The number of inhabitants in Ferrara in the present year is but 30,000!

In the year 1570 (according to Tiraboschi and Rosini, 1572 according to Manso) Tasso accompanied the Cardinal Luigi d'Este on an embassy with which the latter was charged by Pope Gregory XIII., to the Court of Charles IX. of France. There the poet was loaded with flattery and honours; the king himself particularly delighting to distinguish him for the reason, as it is alleged by contemporary biographers, that Tasso had paid such a splendid tribute to the valour of the French nation in his great poem of "Goffredo." Thus it would seem that the "Jerusalem Delivered" was originally destined to bear the name of Godfrey de Bouillon, and also that it was far enough advanced at the period of Tasso's visit to France to allow of a portion of it having become known to the world, at least to the little world of courtiers who surrounded the poet.

But Tasso did not remain very long in France.

Within a twelvemonth he returned to Ferrara, drawn thither by an irresistible attraction—his unhappy and misplaced passion for the Duchess Eleonora d'Este. It appears clearly from the poet's own words* that he became fantastically enamoured of the princess's portrait before he had seen her ; for on his first arrival in Ferrara, during the festivities on the occasion of the marriage of Duke Alfonso with Barbara of Austria, Eleonora was too indisposed to leave her room. But very soon his love ceased to be merely a fantastic dream, and became only too serious and fervent. On her part, the princess was touched and flattered by the adoration of the greatest poet of his day, who was at the same time a very accomplished cavalier. She seems to have had an insatiable appetite for his homage, his praises, conveyed in immortal verse, and his respectful worship of her, at a distance. But the best testimony of the most illustrious Italian commentators seems to exclude the idea that the princess so derogated from her rank as to return Tasso's love like a woman of a less illustrious breed, or as he very certainly desired that she should return it. Scandals of a much graver kind than a

* Sonnet 149. Edition of Pisa. *Nel tuo real petto.*

love intrigue between an unmarried princess and a poet were rife enough in that time and place to make such a suspicion neither strange nor improbable. But various circumstances, minutely searched for, sifted, and collated, concur to show that there is no ground for darkening Eleonora's maiden fame.

But she cannot, I fear, be acquitted on a different count, that, namely, of a cold, hard, and unwomanly indifference to the terrible misfortunes which fell upon Torquato Tasso for love of her. During his long and horrible imprisonment in the hospital of St. Anna, she vouchsafed no reply to his heartrending appeals to her for mercy; nor, so far as is known, did she make one effort to intercede with the Duke her brother for his release. It is true, however, and may be pleaded as an extenuating circumstance, that to have done so might have endangered her own position in her brother's court, and might even have resulted in her own imprisonment in some dull cloister, which Madonna Eleonora would have found a dreary exchange for her brilliant, luxurious, flattered existence in Ferrara. Let the excuse count for what it is worth, but after reading the earlier story of Tasso's intercourse with her, the blank, implacable silence

with which she received his cries from prison chills and oppresses one after three centuries.

After his return from France, Tasso continued to work at the "Gerusalemme Liberata," and produced also a very different species of poem, in the charming dramatic pastoral of "Aminta," which has furnished the model for innumerable other dramas of the same kind. It was represented for the first time in Ferrara, in the year 1573, with great pomp and splendour. Afterwards it was played at Florence, the scenery and decorations being under the direction of the celebrated architect, Bontalenti. It was received with universal applause, and no sooner was it printed than it was translated into several European languages. The Duchess of Urbino (Lucrezia, sister of Alfonso and Eleonora d'Este) sent for the poet to her court, in order that he might read it to her himself; and he spent some pleasant and tranquil months with this princess, partly at Urbino, and partly in a country seat near to it. He returned, in company with the Duchess Lucrezia, to Ferrara, and not long afterwards made part of the suite of gentlemen who accompanied the reigning Duke Alfonso when the latter went into the Venetian Provinces to meet Henry III. of France, who had then newly succeeded to that throne, on his

way from Poland. There was a great gathering of grandees at Venice, and later at Ferrara, whither the Duke invited Henry III., the Cardinal of San Sisto (nephew of Pope Gregory XIII.), Duke Emanuel Philibert of Savoy, Duke Guglielmo Gonzaga of Mantua, and many other notable and puissant seigneurs, to accompany him. The great heats (it was the month of July under an Italian sun), or the fatigues of the journey, or the much banqueting in Venice, or all three causes combined, gave our Tasso a quartan fever, accompanied by so great a languor and weakness, as to compel him to renounce all studious application for a time. His health was not fully re-established until the spring of 1575, in which year he had the satisfaction of completing his great poem of the "Jerusalem Delivered."

And respecting the completion of this fine work certain facts have to be recorded, which it is well to warn the reader are facts; for here the authentic narrative takes upon itself an air of impertinent irony, which might well be attributed to the innocent transcriber of historic events as a flippant attempt to hold up to ridicule the whole race of critics! than whom no variety of the human species are less mirth-inspiring to a right-minded author.

Tasso then, distrustful of his own powers, thought fit to submit his yet unpublished epic to the judgment of various learned men of letters, who, although it does not appear that they have ever produced anything themselves which posterity delights to honour, yet had a great reputation in their day as holding the secret of the only authentic road by which to reach readers in centuries yet unborn. Unfortunately, it turned out that these erudite persons differed in opinion among themselves to a degree quite fatally confusing to the minds of those who consulted them. For example, it may interest readers of the "Jerusalem Delivered," whether in the original or in Fairfax's translation, to know that several critics considered that the protagonist too manifestly eclipsed all the secondary heroes of the poem; that Scipio Gonzaga pronounced the episode of Erminia too improbable; that Sperone Speroni found the "unity of action" defective; that another objected to the descriptions of Armida and her enchanted garden as too glowing; and that Silvio Antoniano wished that not only all the enchantments, but all the love-scenes of whatever nature, should be ruthlessly cut out altogether. Moreover, the episode of Sofronia and Olindo, now deemed one of the most touching and

beautiful in the whole poem, very narrowly escaped excision, because the otherwise conflicting critics were nearly unanimous in condemning it. Fortunately for us of these later times, Tasso, after undergoing a great deal of annoyance, and many struggles with his better judgment, resolved to pay as little heed to his censors as possible. His dilemma, however, is one which will recur again and again ; for the ideal conceptions of a great genius will always be so far above and beyond his performance, as to make the suggestion of amendments in the latter seem very possible to him. But the discontent and diffidence of an extraordinary mind as to its own work is a very different matter from the power of an ordinary mind to better it.

The anxiety and curiosity with which the publication of the "Jerusalem Delivered" was expected, indirectly caused Tasso endless pain and mortification, for the cantos were seized upon one by one as they were finished, and before the poet had time to revise or reconsider them, and passed from hand to hand until they reached some publisher of the day, who gave them to the press full of errors, and even with huge gaps here and there of an entire stanza. Manso says that the MSS. of his poem were got

from Tasso in this fragmentary manner partly by the importunity of friends, partly by the commands of his sovereign masters. Alas, poor poet! Then, too, there assailed him a furious warfare waged by the Academicians of the Crusca against the "Jerusalem Liberated." This critical body was not exempt from the destiny which appears to afflict all similar institutions, namely, a strange adjustment of the focus of their "mind's eye," which makes them unable to perceive genius at a lesser distance than one or two centuries back. One of their number, a Florentine, Lionardo Salviati, published a pamphlet in which he pronounces Tasso inferior not only to Ariosto, which might be a tenable opinion, but to Bojardo and Pulci! Upon which one of Tasso's biographers mildly observes that this is a judgment "most unworthy of one who had the reputation of being learned in the Greek, Latin, and Italian literatures, and of a first-rate critic" (*un critico di prim' ordine*). And he subjoins farther on: "If criticisms dictated by a spirit of party serve to retard the justice due to an original writer, the latter can, however, easily console himself by the certain hope of occupying that place in the temple of glory which posterity, severe and infallible in its judgments, will assign to

him." A comfortable doctrine of the all-the-same-a-hundred-years-hence pattern, with which certain minds "easily console themselves" for the misfortunes of other people!

Some time before the completion of his great poem Tasso had the grief of losing his father. Bernardo Tasso had continued uninterruptedly in the service of Duke Guglielmo Gonzaga, and died on September 4th, 1569, at a place called Ostia, on the Po, of which town he was governor. Torquato hastened to his father, attended him lovingly in his last illness, and after his death consecrated some of his finest verses to his memory.

And now follow thickly on each other's heels misfortune after misfortune, mortification after mortification, treachery after treachery. Envy, hatred, malice, and all the uncharitableness which haunt a court, made Torquato Tasso the chief mark for their poisoned shafts; he stood high enough above the crowd to be well aimed at. Guarini (the author of the "Pastor Fido") set up to be his rival not only in poetry but in the good graces of the Princess Eleonora, and Guarini was a man who might well make the lover, if not the poet, jealous. In 1573 Tasso visited the court of Urbino, and refrained during several

months from writing to Eleonora; and that his silence was due to the pain and indignation he felt at seeing (or fancying he saw—the effect on his mind was the same) a rival preferred to himself by the lady whom he had so long and devotedly served, is abundantly set forth by Professor Rosini. But the proofs he has patiently accumulated are far too voluminous for even a portion of them to be given here; and I advise any reader who is interested in the subject to consult Rosini's "Saggio sugli Amori di Torquato Tasso," inserted in the seventeenth volume of the Pisan edition of Tasso's works published by Niccolò Caparro. Envy, base intrigues, and the blackest treachery, prepared and forged the first link in the chain of misery with which henceforward Tasso was bound. Towards the close of the year 1576 (when Tasso was thirty-three years old) a gentleman of the court of Ferrara, his trusted and cherished friend, with whom, in the words of Manso, "he had held all things in common, even his thoughts," betrayed certain secrets, which Tasso had confided to him, to the Duke. These "secrets" appear to have been love verses addressed to the Duchess Eleonora, without any superscription, or else, in several cases, with a misleading one, such as "verses written for a friend

to his mistress," and so forth. The poems which are still extant are very impassioned, and such as, when addressed by a subject to a woman of Eleonora's rank, were certain to excite the haughty indignation of a despotic prince. By way of example it may suffice to indicate Sonnet 185, the dialogue entitled "Dubbio Sciolto" (Rime, vol. ii. p. 119) and the sonnets numbered 258 and 259. Tasso meets this false friend in the courtyard of the ducal palace in Ferrara, upbraids him with his treachery, and, infuriated by the cynical coolness of his betrayer, strikes him on the face. A duel ensues, in which Tasso (who was a fine swordsman) is manifestly getting the best of it, when two brothers of his adversary come up. All three attack Tasso, who valorously defends himself, and in the midst of a great tumult the combatants are finally separated by the populace. It does not appear that any immediate punishment was inflicted on Tasso, but on the 17th of June in the following year (1577) he was arrested on the accusation of having drawn a dagger on a servant in the apartments of the Duchess of Urbino. He was imprisoned in a room of the palace looking upon the interior courtyard. But after about ten days' confinement he was not only liberated, but the Duke

carried him with him on a visit to his ducal villa of Belriguardo, where Tasso passed nearly a fortnight in the intimate companionship of his sovereign. But now mark the change, sudden and terrible as a clap of thunder from a serene sky. On July 11th Tasso is sent back under guard to Ferrara, where he is shut up in the Monastery of San Francesco, and declared by the Duke's secretary to be a confirmed maniac! (*pazzo spacciato*). Now, it is to be particularly observed that up to that 17th of June, on which day he was arrested for threatening the servant (as it is said), no hint or suspicion appears to have been rife that Torquato Tasso was not completely sane. He walked, as Tennyson phrases it, "with his head in a cloud of poisonous flies," but not even the fertility in lying of envious courtiers had as yet invented the accusation of madness against him. No; this is only launched after the fortnight spent in intimate seclusion with Duke Alfonso at Belriguardo. The explanation given of this strange fact by Rosini reposes upon a mass of evidence which neither time nor space permits us to examine here. Told with brevity and inevitable incompleteness it is this: that the Duke, being still doubtful as to the truth of the accusations against Tasso (which accusations were simply that he not

only loved the Princess Eleonora, but aspired and desired to be loved by her in return, and had written verses strongly implying that he was so), was determined to examine into the matter for himself; that for this purpose, and under the guise of sovereign grace and favour, he carried Tasso with him to a retired country house, and there subjected the unhappy poet to a kind of moral torture or question, as appears very clearly from the lines addressed by Tasso about this time to the spirit of Alfonso's father, the great Duke Hercules:

> Alma grande d'Alcide, io so che miri
> *L'aspro rigor* della real tua prole ;
> Che con *insolite arti*, atti, e parole,
> Trar da me cerca onde con me s'adiri.

("Great soul of Alcides, I know thou dost behold the harsh rigour of thy royal scion, who with unusual arts, and acts, and words, seeks to draw from me that which inflames his wrath against me.") That, having satisfied himself as to the existence of the poet's presumptuous passion, Alfonso proposed to him, as the only method by which he could escape drawing worse evils on himself—and, what was infinitely more important in Alfonso d'Este's eyes, avoid raising any scandal against the Princess Eleonora—to feign mad-

ness! Extraordinary and incredible as such a theory appears at first sight, there are nevertheless a hundred circumstances, and a hundred passages in the writings of the unhappy poet, which tend strongly to confirm its being the true one. Perhaps the most remarkable of all these occurs in the famous letter addressed by Tasso to the Duke of Urbino. In this he says that, in order to regain the Duke's (Alfonso's) good graces, he did not think it shameful "to be the third with Brutus and Solon." Now, of Solon Plutarch relates that he deliberated to feign himself out of his senses, and his servants spread the report throughout the city that he had gone mad; and Brutus is represented by Livy, *ex industria factus ad imitationem stultitiæ.* Surely this is very striking and remarkable! And what follows in Tasso's letter is not less so. He says: "I hoped thus by this confession of madness to open so large a road to the benevolence of the Duke, as that, with time, the opportunity should not fail me of undeceiving him and others—if any others there were who held so false and unmerited an opinion of me." Under what conceivable circumstance could it open a way to the benevolence of the Duke for Tasso to confess himself mad, save on the hypothesis that the Duke desired him to appear so?

However, Torquato, either finding himself unable to keep up the ignoble comedy, or fearing that even the reputation of madness might not avail to secure him from worse treatment, fled from the Monastery of San Francesco a few days after his incarceration there, namely, on July 20th, 1577. He departed alone and on foot, and at length, after a journey made in the midst of unspeakable trouble of mind and hardships of body, he reached Rome, where he remained a short time in the house of his old friend and tutor, Maurizio Cattaneo. But here anxieties and suspicions continued to torment him. He seems to have been haunted by the fear of being poisoned. Nor, when we remember the frequent instances in which this sovereign receipt for getting rid of a dangerous foe or a troublesome friend had been applied in Italy, can we set down Tasso's fear as the mere figment of a diseased brain. The poet's heart turned longingly towards the home of his childhood, and towards his sister Cornelia, sole survivor of his family. But the decree of the Neapolitan Government, which pronounced him and his father rebels, had never been repealed, and his paternal estates were still confiscated. Tasso was an outlaw in his native land. Nevertheless, the longing to revisit Sorrento and to see his sister

became irresistible, and he resolved to gratify it without revealing his purpose to anyone. Having gone on a pleasure excursion to Frascati, he set off thence on foot, secretly, and quite alone, to make the romantic journey which has been so often celebrated by pen and pencil.

We can fancy we see the solitary figure traversing a lonely path at the foot of the mountains, towards Velletri, as the summer evening closes in. Behind him are the rugged hills mantled in purple shadow, home and cradle of the great Latin people whose story has filled every gorge and crowned every peak of them with immortal memories. In front stretches the mysterious and quiet Campagna towards the unquiet and mysterious sea. On the horizon Rome sits brooding on her seven hills, but the great dome of St. Peter's does not yet loom in supreme majesty above the city. It is still unfinished, the drum of the cupola alone being as yet completed. The soil is strewn with colossal fragments of a colossal past; mighty receptacles of dead ashes and living waters the tombs and aqueducts glimmer white through the brief southern twilight. All is still, silent, forlorn; only at intervals some savage buffalo raises his sullen front from the coarse herbage at the unwonted sound

of a footstep, or a wild bird flutters with swift scared flight across the wanderer's path. Infinite sadness on the vast dim plain, infinite sadness in the poet's heart —poor weary human heart, turning from the cruel glitter of courts and the vain-glories of public praise, with a sick yearning for love, and truth, and peace!

Near Velletri, Tasso changed clothes with a shepherd, in whose cane-thatched hut he passed the night, and next morning pursued his journey. After four days of toilsome travel he reached Gaeta, nearly spent with fatigue; and here, by good chance, he found a bark of Sorrento about to return to that port without touching at Naples. In company with a number of humble passengers—peasants, fishermen, and the like—he embarked in her, and after a prosperous voyage, sailing all night upon the calm summer sea, he reached Sorrento and landed there at sunrise. He went at once to his sister's house. She had married, the reader will remember, Marzio Sersale, a noble cavalier of Sorrento, and was now a widow with two sons. Torquato found her alone, and feigning to be a messenger from her brother, gave her so lamentable an account of his state and his fortunes that the poor woman, overcome with grief and agitation, swooned away.

If Tasso's object had been to ascertain his sister's true sentiments towards him, he had certainly attained it. He hastened to reassure her as soon as she recovered consciousness, and by degrees revealed himself as the long-absent brother whom she so tenderly loved, and told her all the particulars of his flight from Ferrara, and its cause. He conjured her to keep his presence in Sorrento secret, and she promised to obey him, only making an exception in favour of her sons, Antonino and Alessandro, to whom she confided that the poorly-clad and wretched-looking messenger was no other than their illustrious uncle, with whose fame all Europe was ringing. To the world she gave out that a cousin of hers from Bergamo was come to visit her.

And now fortune, weary of tormenting her victim, allowed Torquato to enjoy three months of peace and rest amidst the devoted affections of his family and the exquisite beauties of that lovely spot. His two nephews were his constant companions in many an excursion in the neighbourhood, and from the lips of the eldest of them, Antonino, the Marchese Manso gathered the foregoing particulars of Tasso's flight and arrival at Sorrento, which he records in his biography of the poet. But Tasso had not been

there above three months before there arrived missives urging him to return to the Court of Ferrara. He himself states distinctly that Madonna Eleonora wrote to persuade him to go back. But for a time he resisted, although his passion for the princess was by no means quenched even by the "heroic" method (as Italian doctors phrase it) taken by Duke Alfonso to cure him of any overweening attachment to the House of Este. He caused his sister Cornelia to reply to the Princess's letter for him, imploring her highness to permit her to retain her brother with her yet awhile after so long an absence, and appealing to her highness's compassion in moving terms. Tasso himself also wrote to the Duke and Duchess of Ferrara, and to Lucrezia Duchess of Urbino, in the same sense, none of these great personages answering his letters except Madonna Eleonora, who wrote again, urging, nay, commanding him in the most peremptory terms, to return to her brother's court. This fact, it will at once be perceived, is very important, inasmuch as it proves that there was great anxiety at the Court of Ferrara to get Tasso into their power again; and also that an appeal from Eleonora was deemed the most efficacious means for attaining that object—as

in fact, it proved to be. Tasso could not resist the influence of the Princess. But at the moment of setting out from Sorrento he said to his sister that "he was going to submit himself to a voluntary imprisonment."* A remarkable phrase, all the circumstances considered! He reached Rome early in the spring of 1578, and there fell sick of a tertian fever, of which he was not yet cured when he set out again in company with the Cavaliere Gualengo (ambassador of Duke Alfonso in Rome), and finally arrived in Ferrara about the end of March, or a little later.

A series of disappointments and mortifications awaited him here. The Duke appeared to treat him with cool contempt; he was denied access to him and to the princesses; and not only so, but was frequently repulsed by the servants with insolence and indignities. But the real key of the enigma is contained in the following passage from the previously quoted letter to the Duke of Urbino: "He" (the Duke) "would fain have had me aspire to no praise of intellect, to no fame of letters, and that amidst ease and comfort and pleasures I should lead a soft

* Manso: *Vita di Torquato Tasso*, p. 147.

and luxurious life, passing, like an exile, from honour, from Parnassus, the Lyceum, and the Academy, to the school of Epicurus, and especially to that part of his school which neither Virgil, nor Catullus, nor Horace, nor Lucretius himself ever frequented." In a word, the Duke, having declared him mad, insisted that he should continue to pass for such, on pain not only of losing his sovereign favour but of being severely punished. There is no other explanation of these words. Tasso's original claim to the Duke's favour was his genius, and his genius only. The Duke had invited him to his court, and had shown him honour there, solely because he was acknowledged to be a man of such eminence that his fame would shed a new lustre even on the illustrious House of Este. The greater the poet, the greater the patron! And now this same Duke Alfonso desires to stifle Tasso's genius, to smother his writings, to drag him from Parnassus down to "Epicurus' sty." He is to lead a merely animal life, well-fed, well-clothed, well-lodged, and all that the good Duke asks in return is the sacrifice of his genius, his fame, his heart, his mind, and his soul! Unreasonable and irritable poet! Will it be believed that Tasso found the bargain intolerable, and once more fled from his benefactor?

He fled to Mantua, to Venice, to Urbino, to Piedmont, wandering from court to court, and finding mostly but cold comfort; for, as he piteously says in the often-quoted letter to the Duke of Urbino, "interest and the desire to be pleasing to princes shut the door against compassion." An exception must be made to this statement in favour of Charles Emanuel, Prince of Piedmont, who received Tasso with the honours due to his merit, and offered him the same brilliant position that he had enjoyed at first at the Court of Ferrara, if he would enter his service. But it was not to be. Alfonso spared no effort to recover the fugitive. He sent a gentleman after him to Pesaro to persuade him to go back, and other temptations were not wanting. In an ode addressed to the Princesses of Ferrara, the poet says himself that he was "deluded" by false promises. But the main accomplice in seconding the Duke's desire was in Tasso's own breast—his unconquerable passion for Eleonora, and yearning to see her again. In brief, despite the "strong dissuasions" of the Prince of Piedmont and other gentlemen, Tasso returned once more to fatal Ferrara on February 21st, 1579, and two days after was arrested on a charge of having uttered "false, insane, and

audacious words against the Duke," and imprisoned in the madhouse of St. Anna.

And here the unhappy poet remained for seven years; seven years of misery such as few human beings have been subjected to. Despite what has been said in mitigation of the horrors of his imprisonment, it is but too clear that it was hard and cruel and harsh beyond measure. Tasso's own words on this subject are, alas! too explicit to be mistaken. Heartrending, in truth, are the terms in which he laments and complains to the deaf ears of his former patrons. To the Duchess Marguerita Gonzaga, third wife of Alfonso, he speaks of making his "gloomy cell" resound with weeping.* In a letter to Gonzaga he says that, "oppressed by the weight of so many afflictions, he has abandoned all thought of glory and honour;" that, "tormented by thirst, he envies even the condition of the brutes who can freely quench theirs at rivers and fountains;" and that, "the horror of his state is aggravated by the squalor of his hair and beard and clothes, and the sordidness and filth which he sees around him." Still more horrible are certain

* Sonnet 426, *Sposa real.*

phrases which occur in his "Discourse" to Scipio Gonzaga. Here he says: "I do not refuse to suffer this punishment, but it hurts me that an unwonted severity is used towards me, and that a new method of castigation is invented for me;" and after those last dreadful words follows a blank filled up with asterisks. The same thing occurs again and again in the course of this "Discorso," and the reason is that Sandelli, who first published it, deemed it prudent to suppress certain phrases and statements which would have furnished too tremendous an indictment against the "magnanimous" Alfonso d'Este, and others of his house. The original MS. from which Sandelli printed his version of the Discourse has eluded the most zealous search, and in all probability was purposely destroyed.

A cell, lighted only by one small grated window, has for generations been shown to visitors in the hospital of Santa Anna as the place of Tasso's imprisonment. A gloomy and terrible place indeed for such a man to pass seven years of his life in! Of late it has become the fashion to deny the authenticity of "Tasso's prison," as the cell is called. You are told that the poet never lived there; that he had excellent light and airy rooms

in another part of the hospital—what part is not known—and that the compassion excited by the view of the cell is quite superfluous. Even the guardian who now shows it to the stranger (I revisited Ferrara in the late autumn of 1876), although he clings to the statement that Tasso was veritably confined within those narrow massive walls, declares that in the poet's time there was a larger window looking on the courtyard, and plenty of light and air. Now, for my own part, I see no reason whatever to doubt that tradition is in this, as in so many similar cases, a trustworthy guide. The aspect of the cell agrees perfectly with that which Tasso himself says of his prison. It does not agree with that which courtly gentlemen writing within the times, and by no means beyond reach of the influence of the House of Este, have said of it. The reader is at liberty to choose between these conflicting statements.

Here, then, sighed and wept, and perhaps raved, in the bitter despair and indignation of his soul, Torquato Tasso, an honourable gentleman, a faithful friend, and incomparably the greatest poet of his day. To punish him for the crime of loving his sister, Duke Alfonso gave him obloquy in exchange

for glory, solitude for the brilliant society of a court, and instead of the sound of lutes and harmonious voices, the clanking of chains and the howls of maniacs. I cannot presume to decide whether or not there were some morbid strain in Tasso's intellect before he entered St. Anna, but that he did not become a frenzied lunatic before he left it seems to me to indicate a most amazing force of mind.

It is a sickening task to con over the numerous appeals which the wretched prisoner made to the outside world for help. He petitioned the princesses, the Duke of Urbino, the Duke and Duchess of Mantua, various persons at the Court of the Emperor Rudolph and at that of Pope Gregory XIII., the Dukes of Savoy and Tuscany, and the supreme council of the city of his ancestors, Bergamo, to intercede with his princely gaoler. The good citizens of Bergamo did in truth accede to his prayer. His petition (a very touching one) was read in the council amidst tears of pity. They sent a special ambassador to Alfonso to beg him to release Tasso, and the Duke received the ambassador very graciously, and promised to fulfil his request, and the poor prisoner was so elated with hope at

the report of this princely promise (strange that he should have believed it even then!) as to be in hourly expectation of release for several days! And then—and then he was plunged back again into the gloom of despair, and months and years passed by and found him still in his dungeon.

At length he left it, with spirits shattered and body enfeebled. The chief instrument of his release was the Abbate Angelo Grillo, whose name should be known and honoured for this good work. The abbate importuned the Emperor and the Pope, and all the great ones of the earth whom he thought likely to assist his object. And finally, in the year of our Lord 1586, and the forty-second of his age, he was allowed to quit the scene of so much misery and degradation. Ferrara was holding high festival on the occasion of the nuptials of Cesare d'Este with Virginia de Medici; amongst the guests gathered there was young Vincenzo Gonzaga, Prince of Mantua, the son and heir of Guglielmo, Bernardo Tasso's old patron. This youth, induced by the zealous representations of the Abbate Grillo, begged and obtained from Alfonso the permission to carry Tasso with him to Mantua, on condition, however, of keeping him there under strict supervision. After

a time this was relaxed, and he was free to go whither he would, except back to Ferrara.

Little is to be said here of the remaining years of our poet's life. He revisited Naples, made a brief sojourn in Florence, and finally came to Rome, whither he was invited to receive the laurel crown in the Capitol. But a pale, inexorable hand withheld the wreath from those worn temples. Tasso came to Rome but to die. He took up his abode among the monks of Sant' Onofrio, the monastery which stands on the Janiculum and dominates the city and the winding course of the Tiber for many a mile. In the convent garden an ancient oak-tree stood up to the year 1842, which, tradition said, had been a favourite haunt of the poet. It was greatly injured by a storm in that year, but something of it still remains. There remain, too, the grand outlines of the Sabine and Alban Hills, on which his eyes must often have rested, looking from that lofty garden terrace on to the superb panorama it commands. The sunset light, too, was not different three hundred years ago. Often he must have sat in its rosy glow whilst the spring was smiling around him, and thought of the fast-coming moment when for him the sunshine and the scent of violets and the song

of birds should be no more. He died on April 25th, 1595, aged fifty-one years. The symbolic crowning in the Capitol was destined not to be, yet none the less do the voices of fame and posterity award Torquato Tasso a high place among the immortal bards: *Dîs miscent superis.* He was laid to rest in the Monastery of Sant' Onofrio, where a tasteless monument has been erected over his tomb, and where his chamber, and a crucifix and other objects used by him, are pointed out to the visitor. In a corridor upon which this chamber opens there is a fresco on the wall by Lionardo da Vinci, a lovely Madonna and child, with the donor of the picture kneeling before her; and on this fine work, full of the intense serious sentiment which distinguishes Lionardo, our poet's eyes must often have rested sympathetically. Perhaps those last days, during which his tide of life was ebbing, were not among the saddest he had known. Poor, vexed spirit! "After life's fitful fever he sleeps well."

PARINI.

PARINI.

FROM the death of Tasso in 1595 to the birth of Parini in 1729 is a period of 134 years, during which long lapse of time we have not found one name to be added to our small and select gallery. Not that the names of versifiers in ever-increasing abundance may not be found by the dozen in the pages of the literary historians—of Tiraboschi, of Quadrio, and of Arcadian Crescimbeni—and, in the case of many of them, their forgotten volumes on the dusty shelves of old libraries. Their "homes" were the utterly uneventful ancestral palaces in cities sunk in the leaden repose of despotisms well established and no longer fearful of constant revolution, and their "haunts" the innumerable "academies" which sprung up in every one of Italy's hundred cities, and, under the most inconceivably absurd appellations, formed the

delight and sole occupation of a generation lapsed into the very quintessence of fribbledom. No poets! Why, "poetry" was the main occupation of the genteel world in that phase of its existence; and every gentleman gave whatever hours could be spared from the due cultivation of his wig and the proper management of his snuff-box, and the arduous and very absorbing duties of his position as a *cavalier servente,* to the making of verses. But though the ways and habits of society in the Italian cities during that dead time are very far from uninteresting or unprofitable objects of inquiry, it would be vain to hope that any of the individual lives of which that society was composed could be made interesting to readers of this so intensely different, so diametrically opposed time and clime.

Skipping over, then, that dead-low-water period of the seventeenth century, we come to a time the dissolving influences and destructive processes of which were of hopeful augury only in so far that they cleared the ground for future building up. As far as the livers in that time were concerned (confining our observations to the nations of Latin stock) it was, perhaps, a worse time than the previous dead-low-water time; or at least, if it contained new pos-

sibilities for a small number of the choicest spirits, it was such for the peruke and broadcloth-wearing world. And the social system into which our Parini was born laboured under additional disadvantages, derived from the circumstances of its immediately previous political history.

In the latter half of the eighteenth century Milan was still in many respects and to a large degree Spanish; and it was this society, the Spanish foundations of which were heaving with the new French leaven, while it was kept in material order by the strong but not oppressive hand of an Austrian governor, which formed the subject-matter that inspired Parini's muse.

Parini was born in 1729, at the village of Bosisio, on the shore of the Lake of Pusiano. The lake, if not perhaps the village, will be readily found in the map about half-way between Como and Lecco, and some twenty miles to the north of Milan. Bosisio is a large and important village on the eastern shore of the lake, in a lovely position at the foot of the mountains which accompany either branch of the Lake of Como, even to the outlets where they open to give course to their waters athwart the vast plains of Lombardy. There is enough of romantic beauty

about the position to tempt one to indulge in *banalités* about the influences of it on the development of the poet's genius and the like ; but this would be attributing transalpine nineteenth-century ideas and capabilities to a southern eighteenth-century temperament, in a thoroughly misleading fashion. Parini, like the rest of his countrymen and contemporaries, had not the slightest admiration or conception of any "beauties of nature," save such as were by courtesy called such in the alleys and terraces of "trim gardens," and his muse was essentially of the town, townlike.

Nor, though he speaks in long-subsequent years of "il vago Eupili* mio,"† was Bosisio and its lovely neighbourhood long a "haunt" of our poet. His father was, in Italian technical phrase, "benestante" —that is to say, one who lived on his own property. But the property was a very small one—only one small farm—and the life was no doubt such as would not have satisfied a person so placed in other lands and in more pushing and less easily contented times. The young Parini, his only son, showed at a very

* Eupilus was the ancient name of the Lago Pusiano.

† *La Vita Rustica*, ode to a rural life.

early age such an aptitude for study, and such a declared propensity to literature, that the father, who had lived without ambition for himself, became ambitious for his boy; and the upshot was that the family moved to Milan for the sake of obtaining for the lad an education such as his native Bosisio could not afford him. The hopes that were conceived from the promise of the boy's talent must have been high; for it would seem that the family ventured its all upon them. The poor little ancestral farm must have been sold to render the emigration to Milan possible, and with what result, as far as the dreams of fortune were concerned, may be seen from the following lines, written when the proceeds of the farm were all eaten up and gone, and the poor scholar was left with a widowed mother to support:

Ch' io possa morire
Se ora trovo mi avere al mio comando
Un par di soldi sol, non che due lire.
Limosina di messe Dio sa quando
Io ne potrò toccare; e non c' è un cane
Che mi tolga al mio stato miserando.
La mia povera madre non ha pane
Se non da me; ed io non ho denaro
Da mantenerla almeno per domane—

which may be Englished, not without loss of

terseness and expression, as may be supposed, as follows :

> May I die if I know where to turn for a sou,
> Much less for two francs that to-morrow are due ;
> And as for the luck of a mass to say,
> God knows when one may come in my way ;
> And of friends to help I know not one
> To put out a hand to me under the sun.
> My mother—poor mother!—has none but me
> To stand between her and misery;
> And, unless from you you let me borrow,
> I have not a crust to give her to-morrow.

The lines are part of a letter in verse to one Canon Agudio, imploring the loan of ten zechins. Whether the application was successful or not there is nothing to inform us ; nor have we any means of knowing whether the poor mother lived on through those days of struggle and misery to see her son famous.

It will be seen also from the above lines that Parini was in orders. It was quite a matter of course that he should be. For a penniless scholar and lover of literature no other career was to be thought of. Nor did such a candidate for orders himself for a moment pretend, nor did any human being, lay or clerical, pretend, or expect him to pretend, that he had any motive whatsoever in entering the ecclesiastical

career other than the hope of picking up a living by means of some little bit of preferment.

His first instructors were the Barnabite monks of the Arcimboldi College, who rapidly taught him a thorough and profound contempt for themselves and the whole system of their teaching. Here is a passage from the first book of his great poem, the "Giornata," which expresses his own reminiscences of those days at the Collegio Arcimboldi :

> Nè i mesti della Dea Pallade studi
> Ti son meno odiosi. Avverso ad essi
> Troppo ti fero i garruli recinti,
> Ove l' arti migliori e le scienze
> Cangiate in mostri e in vane orride larve,
> Fan le capaci volte eccheggiar sempre
> Di giovanili strida.*

Sundry other intimations of the excessive cruelty with which correction was too often administered in those cloistered colleges may be met with in the writers of that age and country. "I passed," says Corbetta, "my early years in these schools, and,

* "Nor are the sorrowful studies presided over by the goddess Pallas less odious to thee [himself]. Too truly they were rendered hateful to thee by those wordy halls, where the liberal arts and sciences, transformed into monsters, and horrid empty forms, cause the vast vaults to be ever echoing to youthful cries."

remembering the inhumanity and cruelty of the pedants who ruled in them, and considering with pain the evil results which I have seen produced by it, I am in a position to testify to the accuracy of Locke's assertion, that it is rarely the case that cruelly chastised children become worthy men."* One Father Branda, who had been Parini's master, testified subsequently that Parini had profited but little (as was, beyond all question, entirely true) by his scholastic education. And here, extracted from an extant letter by him, is Parini's reply to his master's assertion: "I do not deny anything the Padre Branda says. It is too true that when I frequented the schools near the Church of S. Alessandro [the Collegio Arcimboldi] I recompensed ill the anxious cares of my poor parents, and attended but little to what is there called study. Nevertheless although I never was among those at the top of the class, I did not any the more for that remain among the inglorious mob of dunces at the bottom. And I could still, if need were, show the proud trophies that were decreed to me, on passing from

* Cited by Cantù in his work on *Parini and Lombardy in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 92, where also Cantù himself bears his testimony to the practice of extreme cruelty in these monastic schools.

one class to another, by some of the colleagues of Father Branda. It is indeed true that he will not find my name hung up on the scholastic walls, with some ingenious emblem attached to it and surrounded by a gilt frame, for my parents never had any money to throw away."

In his twenty-first year he suffered from an illness which attacked his muscles, especially those of his legs, from which he never entirely recovered, suffering all his life afterwards from an imperfection of walking, which showed itself in a want of power to lift the foot in stepping. Cantù insinuated that this was due to excess of debauchery in early life; but I find no word in confirmation of this in Parini's earlier biographers, and it does not seem at all probable that such a cause should have led to such a result. In all other respects at the time of his leaving college and entering the Milanese world his appearance was a remarkably prepossessing one. "He was tall of stature," says Reina, "with a large and handsome forehead, extremely vivacious and large black eyes, a nose approaching the aquiline, and open and noble features. The muscles of his face were extremely mobile and strongly marked, his hand a mistress of elegant gesture, and his lips shaped themselves

in accordance with every movement of his mind. He had a powerful voice, sonorous and flexible, a resolute and energetic manner of speaking, and a gravity of countenance frequently sweetened by a pleasant smile."

"Such gifts and qualities combined," says Reina further, "to render him acceptable and sought for by the great," but such seeking is a very doubtful benefit to a young man in the position of Parini. He was a young *abbate*, with no means whatsoever of maintaining himself, save by such chance profits of his profession as were to be picked up by means of solicitation very little to be distinguished from beggary, or by some of the very few occupations which were not considered incompatible with it. One of these was acting as a scribe. And the first means by which he attempted to earn his own bread seems to have been as a copying clerk for the lawyers. It was work, however, not only very miserably paid, but very precarious, as Parini was doubtless experiencing when he wrote the above-quoted letter to the Canon Agudio.

The social system at Milan had not in those days reached that stage of development in which reputation brings with it a certain modicum, at all events, of

emolument. It was still possible for a poet to find himself famous and without bread. In 1752, the twenty-third year of Parini's age, he published a small collection of poems of no great value, at Lugano, with the false date of London. He called himself Ripano Eupilino in the title-page, the first name being an anagram of Parini, and the second a declaration of the district from which he came, the lake whose classic name was Eupili. The pseudonym does not seem to have been adopted for the purpose of concealment of the authorship, but rather in conformity with the then prevalent fashion among the *letterati* of adopting sôme fantastic *nom de plume.* The little work met with an unexpected amount of success, productive of considerable *fama* (fame), but leaving the poet's *fame* (hunger) just where it was. The work, however, recommended him to the notice of the "Trasformati," an academy at Milan who chose so to call themselves. They gave him no bread, having probably most of them but little to give; but they gave him so much applause that the more celebrated "Arcadians" in far-off Rome heard of him, and made him a member of their famous academy. To be an Arcadian was to have received the most authentic *hall-mark* of poesy and recognition

as a servant of Apollo. But few servants have ever been so badly paid as those who served the god in those days in Italy. Fifteen pence, English, was the price of a volume of two hundred pages at Venice; Gozzi's poetical "Gazzetta" was sold for five sous—prices which show only too unmistakably that the authors could have received little or nothing for the MSS. Chambers's Dictionary and Middleton's "Life of Cicero" were translated for three shillings the printed sheet. Twopence-halfpenny was the recognised price of a sonnet. And, considering the quality of the wares, the poets even at that rate would seem to have been better paid than the translators. Goldoni received thirty shillings for one of his plays *a soggetto* (that is, those whose subject, characters, and plot only were furnished by the dramatist, the dialogue being left to the actors), and from fifteen to twenty pounds for his written dramas; from which data Gozzi calculates that each verse was worth something less than each stitch of a cobbler. Passeroni, one of Parini's earliest friends, was so poor that Sterne, when he saw him at Milan, surprised at the evidently miserable condition of his circumstances, and saying, "Why, you must have made ever so much money by your 'Cicerone,'" was answered that

the poem had not repaid the expenses of printing. It is true that the "Cicerone" had made its author a member of the "Trasformati," of the "Arcadians," of the "Fluttuanti," of the "Agiati," of the "Affidati," of the "Infecondi," and many more academies in different cities of the peninsula.* There was abundance of praise, but no scrap of pudding.

A performance of a very different sort from the idyllic rhymes of Ripano Eupilino brought Parini a few years later yet more prominently before the eyes of his fellow-citizens. His old schoolmaster, the Father Onofrio Branda, published a certain dialogue entitled "Della Lingua Toscana," the scope and object of which was to show that the Tuscan alone was, or ought to be, the language of literature; and that the Milanese tongue, despite the mass of literature which belonged to it, was but a barbarous dialect. Of all possible subjects, Divine or profane, it would be impossible to name one which was at that time calculated to excite so much bitter feeling. With the exception of a small knot of cruscanteing puritans, all Milan was moved to a fury of indignation; and

* Cantù, *L' Abbate Parini e la Lombardia*, p. 257.

Parini was selected by a number of his literary friends to be the leader of the attack on the other side. His first writing in reply to Branda was couched in moderate and courteous language; but Branda, furious at the audacity of his old pupil, retorted in a tone that was far from being such. Other combatants rushed into the arena, and the contest became, with the advent of each new combatant, every day more personal, more bitter, and more violent. Parini said himself at an after day that the whole quarrel had been a disgrace to literature; and as it proceeded it so far transgressed the limits of a purely literary dispute that the Austrian authorities were obliged to put an end to it with a high hand.

Parini, however, had been "his country's" champion —for a Milanese of those days knew no "country" but Milan—and the contest had brought his name to the front; and at last, too, he seemed to have attained a position in which a certain modicum of bread would be accorded to him—very salt-tasting bread, as Dante had remarked, making a remarkably wry mouth as he savoured such—but supplied with a degree of daily certainty to which the poet had hitherto been a stranger. He became a tutor in the Borromeo and Serbelloni families. And we have the results of his

observations on the life to which he had in this capacity an access, at least as a spectator, in the poem by virtue of which his name still occupies a conspicuous position on the roll of Italian poets. The noble Borromeo and the noble Serbelloni of the day little thought, when they were bringing this handsome young *abbate*, who had achieved celebrity in a world entirely cut off from their own, within the charmed circle which hedged their social life, that, though he came merely as a mute spectator, they were introducing "a chiel amang them takin' notes," and still less that he would "prent" them. Even when there was no question of tutor-work to be done it was always the correct thing to have an *abbate* hanging about a house; and an *abbate* who had a noble forehead and large brilliant black eyes, and who into the bargain could write sonnets and madrigals on fans and fire-screens, was a catch indeed. And it would seem that even before the tutorship days such a means or occasion of communication between the fashionable world and the penniless poet had been established; for some of his juvenile verses have been recovered from such media of *publication*, and, with doubtful kindness to his literary reputation, preserved.

For it was not an age that could be said to hold literature in no esteem. Literature entered largely into the occupations and amusements of the leisured classes. It has done so in every age among the sedentary and city-life-loving Italians, to a greater degree than has for the most part been the case among the non-workers of our own more open-air-living and field-sport-loving people. And the servants of the Muses by no means all lived in Milanese Grub Street garrets. One poet wrote a sonnet on each invocation to the Virgin Mary in the litany. Another indited a hundred to a creditor to whom he owed three shillings. A third published sixty sonnets on a miser, "written by Ser Lullo, Ser Lallo, and Ser Lello, with notes by Ser Lollo, and a dedicatory letter by Ser Lillo." Verse was written on every sort of occasion—on births, deaths, and marriages, of course; on ladies' pets and lap-dogs; on christenings, confirmations, and first communions; on a nun's taking the veil, or her mother's taking a new *cicisbeo*; on the first sermons of young *abbati*; on professors' first lectures; on bets between the men and the changes in the distribution of a lady's beauty-spots. Two volumes of poetry were published on the death of a favourite cat; among which, says Cantù, the best was

an epigram which may be Englished as follows with tolerable fidelity :

An Iliad written
On the death of a kitten,
In rhymes that are faultless if not very new,
May teach you, musicians,
Actors, poets, physicians,
To prize at its worth the verse lavished on you.

In truth, it would be difficult to imagine a more effete and worthless condition of society than that of Milan at that period. Probably things were even worse in Milan than in the other cities of Italy. Milan was less Italian. The change from Italian manners to Spanish had been a change very much for the worse. And now—at the time, that is, when Parini was frequenting the salons of the Milanese aristocracy —the tone of morals, manners, and fashion was worse than even Spanish pomp and the stupidity of exclusive pride had made it ; for it was beginning to be largely infected by French influences, and a worse amalgam than that produced by Spanish ignorance, laziness, stiffness, formalism, and pride on the one side, and French dissoluteness, frivolity, and licence on the other, it would be hard to conceive. The Austrian influences were at the same time used, as far as

intention went, for good. The governors were always attempting to bridle the universal and increasing dissoluteness and immorality of the time; but it was all done after the old fashion, the uselessness of which we can understand now, because we have come into the world some scores of years later. The main errors consisted in an unbounded and unfailing belief in the efficacy of police legislation, and an incapacity to understand that laws produce other secondary and oblique effects besides those which they are enacted for the purpose of producing.

The state of morality, though by no means such as would have seemed at all satisfactory to English ideas of the present time, had been, during the prevalence of Spanish ways and manners, prevented from becoming outrageously, or at all events openly, licentious, by the almost claustral severity of those domestic habits which the Spaniards had learned from Moorish jealousy and the notions of female propriety imported from the East. But then came an irruption of new ideas from France; and the irruption came upon a society whose sole ideas of right, virtue, and propriety consisted in a traditional blind obedience to a code of formal rules, the absurdity of which was beginning to be perceived and the burden of which was beginning

to be felt to be intolerable. And the ideas which proclaimed a sudden liberation from all the traditional rules by which morality had up to that time been regulated, came inextricably bound up in the same bundle with the ideas which promised that freedom from tyrannies in other departments of life for which the best and wisest were sighing. Can it be wondered at if the result was a disastrous one?

Under the Spanish rule the custom of getting rid of the daughters of noble families by making nuns of them was almost universal. It would have been difficult to find any one of the great families which had not several of its female members in the different cloisters of the city. As children they were sent to nunneries to be educated—very likely to some house of which an aunt or other relation was the superior—and from their earliest years every effort was made to lead them to fear and detest "the world," and to look upon a cloistered life as the best and happiest lot that fate could have in store for them. And for the most part such a system of tactics was successful; and the young girl, her mind having been operated upon much as is the foot of a high-bred Chinese beauty, took the vows readily enough. But there were not wanting instances of tragedies, which in

various ways from time to time startled the minds of parents with partial and transitory glimpses of the real nature of the system. There are many anecdotes of such cases still preserved in Milanese records or memoirs. One such may suffice. It tells of a girl compelled to take the veil against her will, who, when the fatal words had been pronounced, begged to speak with her parents across the grating of the *parlatorio* before they left the convent; and when the request was granted, first loaded them with a torrent of imprecations and then strangled herself before their eyes, but behind the grating, with some part of the fastenings of her dress.

In such a condition of things it was quite a matter of course that marriages in the upper ranks of society were made wholly and avowedly in accordance with motives dictated by considerations of family interest and family pride. Girls were brought out of the cloister in which they had been educated only to be married to men whom they had never before seen, and who were almost always very much their seniors. Quite a matter of course was it also, and quite inevitable, that relief from the misery of such marriages should have been sought in the universal prevalence of the institution known as "cicisbeism." Every lady

had her *cicisbeo.* It would have been both ridiculous and disgraceful to be without one. The name of the person agreed upon by the husband previously to his marriage, as one whom he should not object to see in this relationship to his future wife, was frequently mentioned in the marriage settlement. It was disgraceful in a lady not to be faithful in her affections to her *cicisbeo.* But the service expected from the person thus honoured was not a little rigorous. He was always to attend the lady's levée. He was to bring her the news of the city for the day. He was to keep her servants in good order. He was to attend her every morning to mass; to lift the heavy curtain that hangs inside the doors of the churches for her to pass; to dip his fingers in the holy water, and present the sanctifying drop to her on the tips of them; to place a chair for her on the marble pavement; to hand her her prayer-book; to wait, holding her fan, her essence bottle, or what not, till she had finished her devotions, then to receive her prayer-book; holy water and curtain as before; and then to give her his arm to her palace. He must never fail to accompany her to whatever place of amusement or party she might attend in the evening. The position of *cicisbeo* to a devout and fashionable lady—and all the ladies

were devout and almost all of them fashionable —was, it will be observed, by no means a sinecure. The laws of Milanese society, however, absolutely required that every gentleman who had any pretension of belonging to it should be the faithful and devoted servant of some lady—any lady save his own wife. And it would have been equally ridiculous in a man to be without any such mistress as for a woman to be unfurnished with a *cicisbeo.* Much has been said about the degrees of innocence which are compatible with the existence of these ties, and the degrees of guiltiness which they must be held to have involved. Baretti, among others, who was so well-known once upon a time in the London world, and whose book upon the Italians was once widely read, tries hard to show that in Milan these usages, for the most part, led to no results of the kind which are ordinarily stigmatised as guilt. It is impossible rather than difficult to believe that such could be the truth in the great majority of cases, but it is very possible that in some it may have been as he has represented. But none the less—perhaps even all the more—was the system a demoralising and degrading one; none the less were the women prevented from discharging the duties of wives or mothers; none the

less were the men taught and led to spend their days in a round of frivolity, fribbledom, and idleness, utterly emasculating in its results upon the character, utterly destructive of all civic worth and of every sentiment of moral dignity; none the less was all domestic happiness, in the best and only true sense of the term, rendered impossible.

The pulpit furnished one of the favourite dissipations of the time. Of course not even Spanish severity of etiquette could forbid a lady to attend church. One sermon of the time which has been preserved contains the most accurate and detailed description of the dances most in vogue, and the manners of a ball-room, that remains to us. Another celebrated preacher, one Father Granelli, a Jesuit, whom Maria Teresa employed to restore the fashion of Italian sermons at Vienna, was especially famous for the neat skill with which he could interrupt his sermon to pay an appropriate compliment to any person of distinction who might chance to enter the church in the course of the preaching, and then gracefully resume the thread of his discourse. The dress of the period, before French novelties came to improve it into indecency, might have seemed to have been invented with the scope of impeding as

much as possible every movement of the body, and of requiring as much time as possible in the putting it on and the getting it off again. In the case of either sex it was enormously stiff, heavy, cumbrous, and pompous. The women wore silks and brocades nearly as solid and massive as boards, and of exceeding richness. But a dress lasted a lifetime, and very often passed from mother to daughter. The dressing of the hair, for both men and women, was perhaps the most important part of the whole business of the toilette, as it was certainly that which consumed the most time. The use of powder was universal, and the importance attached to success in causing it to fall with the utmost possible lightness on the elaborately arranged hair, and to the perfectly equal distribution of it, was such that no means of attaining the end in view was thought sufficiently efficacious save imitating the fall of the snow from heaven. An apartment was, therefore, provided in well-ordered palaces specially destined and adapted to this operation. The patient entered, covered from neck to foot with a large sheet; a floury shower began to fall, and in a few minutes he emerged more than half smothered by the dust-laden atmosphere, but with the exquisite architec-

ture of his curls powdered *à ravir*, and not a hair displaced from its artistically ordained position.

Pietro Verri, writing about the middle of the century, published "An Account of a Prodigious Comet observed at Milan in the Year 1763," the meteor in question being the hair of a noble lady who appeared in society adorned by such a *chef-d'œuvre* of hair-dressing art.

"The last of the ostensible daily occupations of our fathers," writes an author describing the times in question in a subsequent generation, "was the winding-up of their watches, which was no small affair, inasmuch as every gentleman carried two and each watch had two cases. Everything was double in those blessed times—two watches, two handkerchiefs, two snuff-boxes."

"But of all the classes," the same writer continues at a subsequent page, "the most intensely formalist in its customs, in its ideas, in its habits, was that of the *abbati*, who furnished the inspiration for so many satires and so many songs, who were objects of curiosity, of admiration, and of delight to the fair sex, who examined them with as much attention and wonder as a young botanist accords to a plant of mandragora." The *abbati*, indeed, played a large

and conspicuous part in the society of which we have been speaking. There was no place, public or private, sacred or profane, where an *abbate* was not privileged to enter. The curiosity with which, as the above-cited author tells us, the fair sex was wont to regard them was not seldom mingled with, or passed into, a sentiment of a more tender description And on this point, again, the apologists of the old society assure us that these clerical gallantries were the most innocent things on earth. The reverend gentlemen in question *pretended* only to do and to be many of the things which they were supposed to do and to be; and it is extremely possible that in very many cases they only pretended to be dying for love of the bright eyes, and fascinating smiles, and well-turned ankles, to which they passed their lives in pouring forth floods of verse. Romantic attachments between clerical lovers, secular or regular, and cloistered nuns very frequently, we are told, helped to render less intolerable the lives of the latter; and we are assured that these affections, however romantic, however passionate, however spoken of by the parties to them in the ordinary language of the most entirely mundane gallantry, were for the most part Platonic in their nature and, in the conventional language which

people apply to such subjects, "innocent." Those who have ever looked into De Potter's "Life of Ricci," the reforming Bishop of Pistoia, will know how far to believe this representation.*

It was as one of this petty and privileged caste of *abbati* that Parini moved among the gay society of Milan—a poor man, it is true, and one who had to make his daily bread by the exercise of his wits, instead of being one of those sleek, wealthy, and courtly sons of the Church who had absolutely nothing to do but to make themselves agreeable in the salons they frequented. Parini had, however, many points in his favour. Several have been already mentioned. Besides these, he had already become favourably known to the worthy Austrian governor, Firmian, who showed himself the poet's steadfast friend and patron.

A very amusing story, by-the-bye, has been recorded of an attempt which the good governor made to improve the fortunes of his *protégé*, and of the result of it. The method which his Excellency hit upon of helping a starving poet is excessively

* A portion of the above account of the Milanese society of the eighteenth century has been borrowed from a work by the present writer published many years ago.

amusing in the intensity of its Austrian and bureaucratical modes of thinking. Governor Firmian appointed the poet to be editor of the *Official Gazette.* Parini set to work in the office assigned to him, nothing loth; and it is not recorded that the Government organ was observed to suffer in any notable degree from the roundness of the man who had been put into that very square hole—the official editorship. But it so happened that one day a tailor, about to measure a customer who lived at or near Parini's office, had provided himself with no measures for the purpose. Now Parini was in the habit of placing slips of MS. on a certain bench, in readiness for the printer to take them for the making up of the journal; and there the tailor, at a loss for some paper to snip up into measures, saw them, snatched them up, and in a moment converted them to his own base uses. Of course there was a *hiatus valde deflendus* in the *Gazette.* What was to be done? Parini in haste seizes his pen, and, *inspirante diabolo,* invents and scribbles off, as the latest news from Rome, a detailed statement to the effect that the reigning Pontiff, Clement XIV., no other than Voltaire's correspondent, the celebrated Ganganelli, determined to put an end to the scandal which had been given

to Europe for so many years by the mode in which, as is well known, singers were prepared to take the *soprani* parts in the music performed in the Pope's chapel, had given orders for the discontinuance of it. The interesting news was forthwith printed. The *Gazette of Leyden* copied it; and from that paper, then one of the most widely circulated in Europe, the tidings were spread over the whole of Europe. Great praise was everywhere bestowed upon the reforming Pontiff. Voltaire wrote him a letter of congratulation on the subject. The sequel of the story, if it had any sequel, has not been preserved to us; but it may be concluded that worthy Governor Firmian discovered that he had been putting a round peg into a square hole.

But the poet was all the while preparing for the work which has achieved for him the place he still holds in the estimation of his countrymen. *Facit indignatio versus!* And as Parini walked among the denizens of that world which has been described, from the morning hours at the male or female toilet table to the turning of the last trick at the card table at night, there was not a folly, a vice, or an absurdity that he was not noting, or a day that did not add to his indignation and the ever-growing desire to chastise

a world which so grievously needed it. With these feelings urging him to the task, Parini planned the "Giorno," a poem to be divided into four parts or cantos, severally entitled the "Mattino," the "Meriggio," the "Vespro," and the "Notte"—the Morning, Noon, Evening, and Night. The subject was to be a detailed description of the day of a Milanese noble, male and female: how abundant and provocative a field for satire of the most scathing kind the foregoing notices of the social system to be anatomised may enable the reader to judge.

It was a great question with Parini whether his projected satire should be written in classical Tuscan or in the Milanese dialect; and the ardent defence of the latter which Parini had, as has been told, undertaken in opposition to the classicists would lead one to anticipate that he would have chosen the dialect of his native province as the vehicle for his satire. There were other reasons for thinking that he would have been led to make that choice. There would, as may readily be imagined, be many things to be said which it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to say in accordance with the unbending rigidity of the Della Cruscan rules of literary, and especially poetical, propriety. The pedantry which for many generations

made it impossible that "Othello" should be presented on the Italian stage, because there was no means of naming in a tragedy so unheroic an article as a pocket-handkerchief, made it excessively difficult to treat such subjects as Parini had to deal with. Then, again, of course the poet's primary object was to address himself to his Milanese fellow-citizens; and it was not to be doubted that such a form as he meditated would command a degree of immediate popularity greater than any that could be expected for a work written in Tuscan Italian. For it must be understood that the dialect spoken by the Milanese was by no means merely the language of the populace. It was the universal vernacular of all classes. Classical Tuscan Italian was the language of literature only. If Tuscany and Rome had been expunged from the map of Italy, it would not have been a spoken language at all. And in Lombardy, as in the other provinces of the peninsula, though the educated and the cultivated could read, and perhaps some of them could speak, Tuscan Italian, even they, as was natural, read with greater enjoyment and readiness their own provincial tongue. It was in every province a matter of *amour propre* also. To every Lombard, Piedmontese, Venetian, Neapolitan, his own dialect was the dearest,

the most delightful, the most vigorous, the most melodious, the best in all respects of all the many forms of Italian. A work of note written in any one of these was cherished by the author's fellow-citizens with especial pride and satisfaction. It was a possession of their own, in which the "foreigners" of cities a hundred miles or so away had no share. It was exclusively their own.

Nevertheless all these strong considerations, though they made him hesitate, did not avail to induce Parini to decide finally in favour of writing in Milanese. He looked round on a wider horizon, and especially looked forward to other days than his own. The probability is that the nature of his subject was of so "burning" a quality, and came so closely home to the hearts and feelings of every class of his contemporaries, that the amount of attention excited by the appearance of the "Mattino" could hardly have been greater than it was had it been written in the choicest Milanese. But if anything was lost in this way Parini's wider ambition has its reward. He would hardly have been known beyond the confines of his native province had he chosen the easier and readier path, and assuredly his name would never have been found on the roll of unforgotten Italian poets.

Other difficulties, however, of a totally different character, attended the publication of satire—or at all events of such satire as Parini's—in those days, difficulties of a twofold nature. In the first place there were the authorities, and in the next place the satirised, to be counted with. The Austrian governors, it is true, were abundantly aware of the degraded and rotten condition of the social world over which they presided, and were not without anxiety for the amelioration of it; but it was by no means consistent with their ideas of government that any man should write and publish that which was like to set the citizens by the ears together, merely because he was animated by a desire to read a lesson to a society which much needed one. But, fortunately for us and for Italian letters, Governor Firmian was a man of sense, and was, moreover, fond of Parini; and when it was mentioned to him by a friend of the poet that he had composed a poem the scope of which was to describe in detail the entire occupation of a Milanese noble's day, and was purposing to publish it, "So much the better," said Governor Firmian; "I am sure enough that it is greatly needed."

It seemed likely at first that the other danger to which satirists were exposed would have been found.

in Parini's case to be a more formidable one. The publication of the "Mattino" caused a commotion in the fashionable world of Milan, such as a bomb-shell falling in the midst of a crowd might occasion. When it was seen how utterly contemptible the hero of the new poem was represented to be, each leading member of the society forthwith insisted that *he* must have been the original from whom the portrait was drawn. The Prince Belgiojoso of that day was one of the most exquisite of the "exquisites" of Milan, "the glass of fashion and the mould of form, the observed of all observers." Who could it be but he whose occupations and pursuits from morning till evening were described with such lifelike exactitude in this audacious *abbate's* poem? And we are told accordingly that he caused Parini to be warned not to proceed any further with his "Day" if he had any care for his own days; for that if he dared to publish his "Noon," which was to form the second portion of the poem, he should himself assuredly never see the evening. And it must be remembered that in those days and in that country such a threat was very readily carried into execution by a man in the position of the Prince Belgiojoso, without any necessity for soiling his own hands with the dirty

work of assassination or any danger of coming into collision with the laws. All that was needed for him to do was to pay.

Nevertheless the "Noon," the "Evening," and the "Night" were published in due course; and the audacious poet died in his bed when his time came. It is probable that the fact that the poet was known to, and valued by, the governor, contributed not a little to this happy result.

If such satire as that of Parini was calculated to expose its author to personal danger, the intensity of the social commotion caused by the publication seems to have secured for it a degree of attention which enabled its author to deal with his publisher on somewhat better terms than such as, it has been seen, were common in those days. The following curious letter from Parini to the publisher—Colombani, of Venice—will be read with interest. Venice, it may be remarked, had then been famous as a centre of publishing and printing enterprise for more than a hundred years; and when the Republic had utterly refused to recognise the validity of the Papal prohibition of works of doubtful orthodoxy, the motive which actuated the Venetians was not so much any tenderness for heresy as a determination that their

printing, paper-making, and publishing trades should not be injured.

The letter is dated Milan, September 10th, 1766:

It was by mistake that I offered you my "Noon." Signor Graziosi [a Milanese publisher] had written to me requesting me to deal with him for it; and, as it happened that it was a long time before I replied to him, I forgot the name and put Colombani instead of Graziosi. [Not a very satisfactory excuse, it may be thought.] However, I am not sorry for the mistake, seeing that I have the same esteem for you that I have for Signor Graziosi. As to my "Sera," I have pretty well given up all thought of it. Not that I should not like to complete the three little poems announced by me [it must be supposed that the "Notte" was not yet thought of, or perhaps the writer may allude to an announcement of the "Noon," the "Evening," and the "Night," made after the publication of the "Morning"], but I am disgusted by the greediness and intrigues of the printers. Not only have they reprinted everywhere the other two poems [the "Morning" and the "Noon"], but they have done so without any communication with me, without so much as sending me a copy or giving me an opportunity of correcting an error. This poem, the "Sera," is scarcely begun; and I have not taken any trouble to go on with it, seeing that I cannot expect any advantage from it. And, unless I am tempted to proceed, I shall probably never finish it. I do not object to your proposals; and with regard to them I answer that it is my intention to bring out an elegant edition of all the three little poems [the "Notte," it would seem, was not contemplated at this time] when the work shall be completed. If, then, you feel disposed to undertake it, I offer to put the completed MS. of the "Sera" into your hands by the beginning of next spring, and that of the other two poems at the same time, corrected and

improved in many places. The price I ask, with the intention of not abating a stiver, is one hundred and fifty zechins, to be paid one-third on the conclusion of the contract and the remainder on the delivery of the MS. If you are not contented with those terms do not trouble yourself to write any further about it. I have been induced to answer your letter by the civility with which you write to me. I have not done as much for several other publishers, and two or three Venetians among them, who have presumed to make me offers such as are proposed to the makers of almanacs. To the vulgar letters of such people I shall never trouble myself to reply. I will do my utmost to assist the circulation of your journal. And with much esteem I am, etc., G. PARINI.

Peremptory as is the tone which the poet adopts in the above letter, Cantù says, though without telling us what his grounds for thinking so are, that Parini did not ever receive the 150 zechins.

The economically unfortunate position of literary men in Italy at that time, which in truth is but little, though certainly somewhat, ameliorated at the present day, is curiously illustrated in various passages from certain letters of Barreti, which are the more interesting from the contrast with the state of things in England, which his competent knowledge of our country enabled him to expose to his correspondents. "Would you believe it," he says, writing to a Milanese friend in 1765, "that in Rome, *caput mundi*, and in Florence, *caput sapientiæ*, I have

not been able to sell ten copies of my 'Letters' and of my 'Frusta'? You may judge, then, how it must have been in other cities. You have no idea what our publishers are; and we must pass through their hands." Again in 1770: "There are things I should like to write, but not in Italian—in English, if you will, for I get good guineas for them." Again in 1777: "I am disgusted to find that the reprints prevent Passeroni from getting the profit from his 'Cicero,' which ought to come to him. But these numerous independent governments of ours are very unfavourable to our literature; and to infinite mischief arising from this cause may be added the terrible dishonesty which flourishes with so rank a growth among all our *canaille*, in the number of whom I include every one of our printers." It seems rather unreasonable to accuse the Italian publishers of causing the state of things complained of, because each individual of them would not attempt to remedy by his own self-sacrifice the mischief caused by political misgovernment, especially as individual abstinence from reprinting would of course in no wise have mended matters. The following passage from the same letters is curious:

In England, and especially at London, the writing of books is so thoroughly reduced to a profession that *the trade of an*

author [*sic* in original] is a very common phrase in the mouths of Englishmen. Whoever has sufficient talent to cause his work to be bought by only as many as six or seven hundred persons in all that part of the island which is properly called England—no very difficult thing to do—has at once a nearly absolute certainty of being able to live honestly by his pen. . . . The insatiable avidity for reading new things which characterises the English, from the greatest lord and most fashionable lady down to the poorest little artisan and the most slatternly servant girl, demands continual food. Hence it is that more than four thousand pens in London alone are employed in furnishing the means of satisfying that enormous demand by means of *thirty abundantly well-filled Gazettes* [italics in original] under various titles, of innumerable pamphlets and magazines [*panfletti* in original—a word, I take it, to be found nowhere else in the language], and sheets in imitation of *The Spectator*, and extracts from Holy Writ and from writings botanical and medical, and dictionaries printed in numbers, and literary and critical journals, and satires, and libels, and panegyrics, and romances, and history, and poetry, and infinite other matters. All this is sold by retail from day to day, from week to week, and from month to month, and all this without counting a large number of voluminous works published in the course of each year. In fact, I do not think I should exaggerate in saying that more is printed in England in one week than in the course of a whole year in Italy. It is enough to observe that each sheet of a gazette sold pays one halfpenny English to the King, and that this exceedingly small tax brings in, as I am assured by credible and well-informed persons, a revenue of two hundred pounds sterling a day from the city of London alone.

Angry as a very large portion of the fashionable society of Milan was with the caustic poet, Parini's poem had made him a personage at Milan. We

are told much by his contemporaries of the remarkable nobleness and dignity of his demeanour and bearing as he walked through the streets of the city, and this despite the malady or imperfection in the muscles of his feet, which caused him to be more or less lame all his life. He is spoken of as "majestically limping" along the public ways. It was thus that Leopold II. of Austria once saw him in the street on the occasion of an imperial visit to Milan, and was so struck by his appearance that he asked who that specially dignified-looking personage was; and on being told that it was the celebrated poet Parini, he declared that it was scandalous that such a man should be obliged to walk afoot, and "ordered" that a carriage should be supplied for him at the public cost. Such manifestations of imperial sympathy with literature may perhaps be judged to be admirable in every point of view save that of a public financier and political economist; but these inconveniences, if not scientifically understood, were practically remedied in those days by the simple method of paying no attention to such commands. And Parini walked afoot to the end of his days.

Before this, however, his good friend Governor

Firmian had, soon after the discovery of his incompetency as a newspaper editor, placed him in a situation at least secured from the grinding poverty with which he had had to struggle in his earlier days. A new professorship of literature was created for him, despite the bitter opposition of the Jesuits, at the Palatine Schools in Milan, which he continued to hold till the institution was abolished, when he was appointed Professor of Eloquence at the Brera College. He subsequently became Professor of Fine Arts in the same establishment. His lectures were very numerously attended, not only by his fellow-citizens, but by many who came from other parts of Italy for the purpose; and some of his lectures were published, and enjoyed a very high reputation among his contemporaries. These, with a work on the "Principles of Belles-Lettres" and a selection of other short pieces in prose, constitute the second of the two volumes of Parini's works in the Milan collection of Italian classics published in the early years of this century. But, however much they may have excited the admiration of the author's contemporaries and countrymen, the pages of this second volume of his works are little likely to be ever much turned again.

The publication of them, however, at the time decidedly contributed to exalt the poet's social as well as his literary standing; and when the French invaded and conquered Lombardy, Parini was named a member of the municipality of Milan, an office which he held as long as it seemed to him that by doing so he could render any service to his fellow-citizens; and it is recorded that on quitting it he caused the whole of the emoluments he had received to be distributed to the poor of his parish. To have held office under the invader and usurper was of course no recommendation to the Austrian authorities when Lombardy again fell into their hands in 1799; and it indicates very significantly the high esteem in which he was held by all parties that not only was he in no wise molested by the Austrians on their return, but was allowed quietly to resume his lectures at Brera, as if nothing had happened.

In truth, it is probable that Parini's real sympathies were with the Austrian Government rather than with that which had supplanted it, as, indeed, those of an honest man were likely to be. The former was beyond all comparison the better, the less corrupt, the less tyrannical of the two. Both

were alike foreign invaders of the Italian soil; but "Italy" really was then but "a geographical expression," and nobody objected to the Austrian rule on the ground that it was not Italian in those days. Practically those provinces of Italy that were subjected to it were by far the best-governed part of the peninsula.

One or two *mots* of Parini have been preserved which serve to indicate that his affection for the invader whom he found himself obliged to serve was not of an enthusiastic character.

Some of the members of the Milanese municipality, after the absurd ideas and fashions of the time, insisted that all persons who appeared before them on business should keep their hats on. On one occasion a poor old peasant, who found it very difficult to overcome his lifelong habits of respectful bearing before his superiors, could with difficulty be persuaded to conform to the republican ordinance. "My good man," called out Parini, "when you come here you must cover your head and look well to your pockets."

At the troublous time when the French had just established their dominion the poet was wont to meet his friends in the morning with the query,

"Are you as honest a man this morning as you were yesterday?"

After the return of the Austrians Parini continued to live his quiet, studious life, lecturing at the Brera and enjoying the society of a knot of literary friends during the few months that remained for him. He had several of them with him when, on September 18th, 1799, Dr. Jacopo Locatelli, his physician, calling to see him, told him that the hour of his departure, though probably not immediately imminent, was not far off. Parini returned to the room where his friends were and continued the conversation with the most perfect serenity. He was shortly afterwards attacked by a slight fit of nausea, and at the same time complained of a violent feeling of burning between the shoulders. "Once upon a time," said he, "it would have been thought to be caused by an evil spirit; now nobody believes any more in evil spirits, nor in the devil, and as little in God, in whom, however, Parini does believe." And the incident is worth mentioning as a reply to the accusation of atheism, of which he has been accused in company with so very large a number of the men of that day whose lives showed that they were not thoroughgoing Churchmen.

The above words were the last spoken before his friends took leave of him at about two o'clock in the afternoon. A few hours later he laid himself upon his bed and expired without pain or trouble a few minutes afterwards.

Such was the tranquil and little-eventful life of a poet whose home and habitual haunts were larger and more all-important factors in the production of his poetry than can be said to have been the case in any other Italian instance. Doubtless the greatest value of Parini's poem to readers of the present day consists in the fact that it is a faithful transcript of the very curious state of society in which he lived; but it is not *solely* on this account that the "Giorno" deserves a larger share of attention than it meets with among English readers.

ALFIERI.

ALFIERI.

"IN a word, you have formed for yourself a habit of mind such as it behoved you to have, in order to become the great poet that you are. But *nil admirari* is the motto of the true philosopher; for what we admire is, for the most part, a delusion." Thus writes to his friend, Vittorio Alfieri, the Abbé Tommaso di Caluso, in a letter in which he discusses certain social and political theories of the former. Certainly nothing was further from Alfieri's mind than the *nil admirari.* Burning admiration, and its complement, burning contempt—enthusiastic loves and unquenchable hatreds—possessed his soul from youth upwards; and we have in his Autobiography a portrait of his own character limned with a firmness and truth such as few men have achieved in the painting of themselves.

Vittorio Alfieri was born in the city of Asti, in Piedmont, on January 17th, 1749, "of noble, rich, and virtuous parents," to use his own words. His father was the Count Antonio Alfieri; his mother, Monica Maillard de Tournon, of a Savoyard family resident for some generations at Turin. When Count Antonio Alfieri married her she was, although still very young, the widow of the Marchese Cacherano, also of Asti, by whom she was the mother of three children, two girls and a boy. Count Alfieri was considerably past fifty at the period of his marriage, and he died in his sixtieth year, leaving two children—a daughter, named Giulia, and our poet, then an infant not a year old. His widow married again. Her third husband was the Cavaliere Giacinto Alfieri di Magliano, of the same family as the Counts Alfieri, but of a younger branch. This Cavaliere Giacinto was a man near her own age, of a handsome person and excellent character. His stepson Vittorio speaks of him with constant esteem and affection, and his union with Count Alfieri's widow was a perfectly happy and well-assorted one.

If my readers should chance to be familiar with the name of Asti, it is probably in connection with a sweet effervescing wine, *Asti spumante*, which is a

favourite vintage in Italy, and which is grown in the immediate neighbourhood of the town. Travellers who come through the Mont Cenis tunnel into Italy, and pursue their southward way from Turin towards Genoa, pass by the station of Asti. It lies in the midst of a highly-cultivated district, interspersed with low hills, and within view of the magnificent chain of snowy Alps, with Mont Blanc supreme above all. The city now contains somewhat over thirty thousand inhabitants. At the time of Alfieri's birth this number was, of course, much smaller—probably not one-half of the present census. There is a fine Gothic cathedral in it, dating from the first half of the fourteenth century, and containing some interesting old frescoes. For the rest, the town possesses little of interest beyond the Palazzo Alfieri, where visitors go to look at the chamber in which our poet first saw the light, and a statue of him erected by his townsmen in 1862.

Little Vittorio was far from being considered an infant prodigy. He had his naughty fits and his good fits, his lazy days and his industrious days, like other little boys; and he professes to have but a dim and faint reminiscence of those

first three or four years of his life, which he denominates "the stupid vegetation of infancy." But his Autobiography abundantly proves that those first years contained a great many emotions, impressions, and sentiments quite incompatible with a mere "stupid vegetation." When he was nearly seven years old his sister Giulia (his senior by nearly two years) was placed in a convent in Asti, to be educated. The parting from this sister—although at first he was permitted to visit her every day—was intensely painful to him. Nearly forty years afterwards, in writing of it, he says he well remembers the tears and grief which it cost him; and the same keenness of sensibility remained with him to the end of his days. His stepbrother and sisters—the children of the Marchese Cacherano, his mother's first husband—were sent to school in Turin; and thus little Vittorio remained the only child at home, and was put under the care of a good priest called Don Ivaldi, to be taught reading, writing, and arithmetic, and, later, Latin enough to construe Cornelius Nepos and Phædrus.

The Autobiography gives several little anecdotes of Vittorio's childhood, as illustrating the dominant traits of his nature. I will give one in his own

words, merely compressing the original here and there, but altering nothing.

"Of all the punishments inflicted on me, the one which afflicted me beyond measure, and indeed to the point of making me ill—so that it was only given to me twice—was sending me to mass with my nightcap on my head." (It must be explained that this nightcap was a green silk net, of the form worn by Andalusian dandies, as Alfieri subsequently observes, and therefore by no means an unbecoming headgear in itself.) "The first time I was condemned to it (I no longer remember for what offence) I was dragged by my tutor's hand to the neighbouring church of the Carmine, an unfrequented church where there were never as many as forty persons to be found assembled in its vast space. Nevertheless, so greatly did this punishment affect me, that for more than three months afterwards I continued irreproachable. . . . . I fancied that the eyes of everyone must necessarily be fixed upon my net, that I must look terribly disfigured in that guise, and that everybody must consider me a real malefactor, seeing me punished in so dreadful a manner. . . . But the extraordinary effect produced on me by this punishment had highly delighted my parents and my tutor; so

that at the least shadow of misbehaviour, being threatened with the abhorred net, I became tremblingly dutiful at once. However, having one fine day committed some unusual fault, and having told my mother a solemn lie to excuse it, I was once more sentenced to the net; and, what was more, it was decreed that, instead of the deserted church of the Carmine, I should be taken to San Martino, a long way from home, situated in the centre of the city, and much frequented about midday by a crowd of fashionable idlers. Oh, what misery I felt! I begged, I wept, I raved, all in vain! That night, which I really thought must be the last of my existence, not only did I not close my eyes, but I cannot remember in any subsequent sorrow having passed a more wretched one. At length the hour arrived; nightcapped, sobbing, and crying, I was dragged by the arm by my master, and pushed from behind by a servant, and in this fashion we passed through two or three streets, where we met nobody. But no sooner did we approach the more thickly populated neighbourhood of the Piazza and church of San Martino than I immediately left off crying and screaming and letting myself be dragged, and walking quietly, and even quickly, close to the priest, Don Ivaldi, I

hoped to pass unobserved, pressing myself close to his elbow, and half-hidden by the folds of his flowing ecclesiastical robe. I arrived at the crowded church, guided by the hand like a blind person; and indeed I shut my eyes at the door, and never opened them again until I had knelt down in my place for hearing mass; and even then I did not raise them sufficiently to distinguish anyone. On going out I made myself blind again in the same way, and returned home with death in my heart, thinking myself dishonoured for evermore. All that day I neither ate, nor spoke, nor studied, nor even wept; and in short, such was the grief and tension of my mind, that I fell ill for several days; and from that time forward the punishment of the nightcap was never even mentioned in our house, so terrified was my affectionate mother by the despair I had exhibited. And on my side for a long time to come I never told a lie; and who knows whether I may not owe it to that blessed nightcap that I have grown up to be one of the least untruthful men with whom I am acquainted?"

On the death of his father, Vittorio had been placed under the legal guardianship, so far as the care of his property was concerned, of an uncle, his father's younger brother, the Cavaliere Pellegrino

Alfieri, a man of influence and consideration at the Court of Turin. When the boy was nine years old, this uncle caused him to be removed from his mother's and stepfather's roof to a college at Turin, called the Accademia, frequented by lads of good family. This Accademia was a sumptuous edifice, consisting of four sides, with an immense courtyard in the centre. Of these four sides two only were occupied by the scholars, the other two consisting of the Royal Theatre and the king's muniment-room. The court pages, to the number of twenty or twenty-five, were also lodged in an angle of the huge building on the first-floor. Thus the boys who were sent to be educated at the Accademia were, oddly enough —and, as Alfieri says, badly enough—placed between a theatre which they were never permitted to enter, except four or five times during Carnival—the pages, who, with their lounging court service, their hunting-parties and riding-parties, appeared to the young scholars to be leading a life of enviable ease and diversion—and a number of rich foreign youths, English, Russians, and Germans principally, who formed a class apart in the academy, and were subjected to scarcely any supervision, nor to any rule save that of returning to their rooms before mid-

night. Add to this, that all the masters and teachers were ecclesiastics, very ignorant of the world, and, in most cases, very ignorant of the subjects they professed to teach, and one has a curious picture of confusion and incongruous things and persons jumbled together, to the bewilderment of childish minds.

Such was the "home," such were the "haunts" of our poet during eight years. Of education, properly so called, he had none; of instruction very little, and that imperfectly imparted. He spoke habitually the rough and barbarous Piedmontese dialect, knew a little French most incorrectly, and was so ignorant of Italian—he, the future author of works which are counted among the classics of the Tuscan tongue—that when a stray volume of Ariosto fell in his way he boggled and stumbled and perplexed himself over it in the vain effort to comprehend the bare signification of the words! His health was bad, and he was subject to an eruption on the head which, from its disgusting nature, caused him infinite suffering of mind—far more than discomfort of body. By way of polite accomplishments he had lessons in music, fencing, and *dancing*. The two former he learned but little of, principally, as he alleges, because those lessons came at an hour when he had only just risen

from table, and was heavy and unable to fix his mind on the close parallel lines, with their mysterious black dots, or to follow deftly the rapid movements of the fencing-foil. But dancing he never learned, for two reasons: the first being that he abhorred "that puppet-like art," as he calls it; and the second that he detested the dancing-master, a Frenchman, newly come from Paris. And here I will transcribe a passage from the autobiography, because it reveals what was possibly the first root of an animosity and hatred which absolutely coloured his whole mind for the rest of his life:

"Things went so far that after a few months I gave up the lessons altogether, and I have never been able to dance even half a minuet. The very word, indeed, has ever since made me laugh and shudder at the same time; which two effects have always subsequently been produced upon me by the French people and by all their doings, which are nothing else but a perpetual, and often very badly performed, *minuet.* I attribute, in great part, to that dancing-master the unfavourable opinion—perhaps even a little *too* unfavourable—which has always remained at the bottom of my heart respecting the French nation; notwithstanding that it possesses some

pleasing and desirable qualities." Anyone familiar with Alfieri's writings, especially the *Misogallo*, can easily conceive the effort it cost him to make the latter not very large admission, and the stern clutch of the pen and set of the scornful mouth with which he magnanimously wrote it down!

In 1763 Alfieri's uncle and guardian, who had been sent as viceroy to the island of Sardinia, died in Cagliari. And by his death a great change was made in all the material circumstances of the boy's life. According to the laws of Piedmont at that time minors were released *à statu pupillari* at the age of fourteen years. That is to say, they ceased to be subject to the power of a guardian, properly so called, and passed under the lighter yoke of a *curatore*—a sort of trustee, whose business it was to see that they did not alienate their principal, whilst leaving them absolute masters of the income derived from it. And this state of things lasted until the minor was twenty years old; after which he was quite free. Thus at fourteen years of age Vittorio Alfieri found himself in the untrammelled possession of a handsome income derived from his own patrimony, together with the not inconsiderable fortune of his uncle the viceroy, whose heir he was! It is scarcely necessary to say

that he forthwith plunged into various extravagances more or less absurd. The wonder is that a boy brought up as he had been, utterly inexperienced and ignorant of the world outside the walls of his school, inclined by nature to lavishness, and endowed with a considerable dose of vanity, should not have made a worse use than he did of his intoxicating wealth and freedom. One of his first acts was to go to the riding-school. He had long ardently desired to learn to ride, but had hitherto been refused permission to do so —he does not say why. Possibly the exercise may have been deemed too violent for him, for he was still a very delicate, weakly boy. However, it turned out that the riding was of great benefit to his health; and he says that from the time of commencing it he began to grow tall and strong, and rapidly acquired vigour and robustness. He soon became an expert horseman, and retained to the end of his days a passion for horses.

The years from sixteen to about nineteen were passed by our hero in a restless round of trivialities which made him despise himself, and never really satisfied a nature meant for higher things. There is something almost appalling in the picture he gives of a fiery spirit filled with genius and ambition, stifled

in the exhausted atmosphere of a microscopic capital and a stagnant court. Not that Vittorio ever was, or would be, a courtier; but that all his relatives, connections, and friends lived and moved and had their being in the pompous trivialities of court employment; and looked upon literature and art as mere vehicles (when properly employed) for the amusement and relaxation of the lords of the creation, who are well known (or were thought to be so in Turin once upon a time) to consist of gentlemen of long unblemished descent and Catholic principles. I have used the words "literature" and "art," but in truth at this period Vittorio was almost as ignorant of both as his noble compeers. Only he *divined* their existence, as a sunflower in a dark cellar might gropingly turn itself towards a chink to the eastward.

In 1766 he obtained a commission in the provincial regiment of Asti—a species of militia, which made much lighter demands on his time and attention than would have been the case in other branches of the service. But even the slight amount of military duty he had to perform he soon found intolerably irksome. And in the course of that same year he sought and obtained leave of absence to make a journey to Rome and Naples. The permission of

his military superiors by no means sufficed for this purpose. At that time in the little kingdom of Piedmont the king, as Alfieri bluntly says, "interfered in every little matter." Especially were those who had the privilege or misfortune to be born noble subject to his majesty's paternal supĕrvision. Indeed, no member of that class, young or old, rich or poor, civil or military, could quit his dominions without the king's personal permission asked and obtained. And the king (at this period Charles Emanuel the Third, a just ruler and a worthy man, according to his lights) was peculiarly averse to the idea of his nobles travelling in foreign parts. However, all obstacles were at length overcome, and Alfieri set forth on his southward way in the company, and in a measure under the care, of an English Catholic priest, who was travelling with two pupils, a Fleming and a Dutchman.

It is very strange to read the account Alfieri gives of this his first journey. Travelling was then, and continued to be for many years, a passion with him. And yet he was, in the year 1766–7 utterly incapable of enjoying those associations which make Italian travel so unique an experience to cultured minds. For example, at Milan, in the Ambrosian Library

when an autograph MS. of Petrarch's was put into his hands, he says: "I threw it down, like a true barbarous Allobrogian, declaring that I cared nothing about it. But, in truth, at the bottom of my heart, I had a certain spite against Petrarch; because once, a year or two previously, when I was still at school, a Petrarch having chanced to fall into my hands, and I having opened it here and there, at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end, and having read, or rather spelled out, a few verses, I was unable to construe or understand the sense of a single passage. And upon this I had passed sentence on him, in chorus with the French and other ignorantly presumptuous persons, as a tiresome writer of cold conceits and affectations; and had thus worthily treated his most precious manuscript." But it is manifest here, as in many other passages of the autobiography, that Alfieri's was not the calm self-sufficiency of stupid presumption, but the proud, irritable sensitiveness of a mind ashamed of its ignorance, and ashamed of being ashamed.

The rest of the journey, through Piacenza, Parma, Modena, Bologna, to Florence, and thence to Rome and Naples, need not be dwelt upon. Everywhere Alfieri was restless, ill at ease, dis-

satisfied with himself, unable to understand and appreciate the artistic treasures around him, and devoured by a noble discontent with the trivialities of fashionable society which there, as now and in other communities than Italian cities, made up the daily life of a rich young man of rank. He was, indeed, shy and solitary to the verge of savageness. Yet, despite his lamentable lack of education, it is clear that even then, as a mere boy of eighteen, he looked at many things with the seeing eyes of genius, which supplied his total want of experience. For instance, he says of King Ferdinand the Fourth of Naples, to whom he was presented: "Although he" (the king) "was but fifteen or sixteen years old, I observed his demeanour to be precisely similar to that of the three other sovereigns whom I had seen up to that time; namely, my good King Charles Emanuel, an old man; the Duke of Modena; and the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Leopold, a mere youth. So that from that time forth I understood very well that all princes have but one face, and that all courts are but one antechamber."

After some rather difficult negotiations at Turin he succeeded in obtaining an extension of his leave of absence, and permission to go to France and

England. With the eager and restless rapidity which characterised his journeyings at this time, he pushed on night and day, looking neither to the right nor to the left, so to speak, until he reached Paris. It was on a morning of the middle of August, 1767, that he first entered that city, the object of his dreams and desires for some time past. Here is his own description of his first impression of it: "It was a cloudy, cold, and rainy morning. I had just left the bright skies of Provence; and I had never in my life seen such dirty fog, especially in the month of August. My entrance into Paris by the most wretched faubourg of Saint Marcel, and my progress through what seemed like a stinking, muddy sepulchre to St. Germain, where I was to put up, so oppressed my heart, that I do not remember in all my life to have felt a more painful impression from a cause so slight. After all my fatigues, my panting haste, my mad illusions of a heated fancy, to find myself plunged into a fetid sewer!"

The picture is not inviting. But it was probably scarcely overcharged; for we must remember that we are looking at the Paris of a century ago, and that Louis the Well-beloved was reigning over a devoted people.

Alfieri was thoroughly disgusted with Paris, and admits that he did not attempt to mitigate his first impressions by looking at the other side of the medal. He determined to proceed at once to England; but his anticipations of that country were considerably cooled by the great shock of his Parisian disappointment. And he says that he already began to appreciate Naples, Rome, Venice, and Florence better than he had done before his ultramontane travels. But before departing to cross the Channel, his Ambassador offered to present him at the French Court in Versailles, and he accepted the offer, chiefly from curiosity. "I was presented," says he, "on New Year's Day, 1768. Although I had been forewarned that the king did not speak to ordinary strangers, and although I certainly cared nothing about that privation, yet I found it hard to swallow the Jove-like manner of Louis the Fifteenth, who, having stared at the individual presented to him from head to foot, gave no indication of having received any impression whatsoever. . . . But this negative kind of disdain troubled me no longer when I perceived that the king went about giving precisely similar looks to personages of much greater importance than I was. Having made a brief prayer between two prelates; of

whom one, if I remember rightly, was a cardinal, the king betook himself towards the chapel, and between one door and another there advanced to meet him the *Prévôt des Marchands*, chief officer of the Municipality of Paris, who stammered out the usual compliments for the New Year. The silent monarch replied to him by a movement of the head; and, turning to some of his courtiers who were following him, he asked what had become of the *Échevins* (Sheriffs), who according to custom, accompany the Provost on such occasions. A voice issuing from the midst of the crowd of courtiers made answer jocosely, 'They have stuck in the mud;' whereupon all the Court laughed, and the king himself smiled, and passed onward to the mass which awaited him. Inconstant Fortune so willed it that, in little more than twenty years afterwards, I saw in Paris, in the Hôtel de Ville, another King Louis receive much more benignantly a very different sort of compliment made to him by another Provost, under the title of *Maire*, on the 17th of July, 1789; and that time it was the courtiers stuck in the mud on their way from Versailles to Paris. And I should, perhaps, thank God for having witnessed such a thing, were it not that I fear, and, alas! believe, that the influence of

these mob-monarchs may be still more fatal for France and the world than that of the Capet Kings."

In the middle of January, 1768, Alfieri arrived in England, disembarking at Dover. After his description of Paris one is prepared for no very flattering words about London from this beauty-loving, enthusiastic Italian poet in embryo. But, for the satisfaction of our national self-love, I must hasten to transcribe the passage in which he gives an account of his first impressions of this island: "Quite as much as Paris had digusted me did England, and especially London, please me at first sight. The streets, the inns, the horses, the women, the universal well-being and life and activity of this island, the cleanliness and comfort of the houses (although extremely small), the absence of beggars, the perennial movement of money and industry, distributed equally in the provinces as in the capital —all these real and unique endowments of this fortunate and free country transported my soul at first sight. And in two other visits which I subsequently made to it I have never altered my opinion; so enormous is the difference between England and all the rest of Europe in these numerous branches of public felicity, resulting from

a better government. And although I had not then studied the constitution which produced such prosperity, yet I was able to observe and appreciate its divine effects."

We are not accustomed to look back on the early part of the long reign of George III. as a period remarkable for civil liberty, social well-being, or national prosperity. And yet to the eyes of a foreigner imbued with a genuine love of rational freedom, England, even in that pigtailed and pipe-clayed stage of her development, appeared a paradise of liberty and civilisation in comparison with the oppressed countries of the Continent.

In London Alfieri was introduced into the most fashionable and aristocratic society of the day, and for a time frequented balls, routs, supper-parties, and all the scenes of fashionable dissipation. But after about three months of this life he became intolerably weary of it. Indeed, at all times he found what is technically called "society" to be as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. And he then took an eccentric resolution: instead of acting the part of fine gentleman at these festivals, he determined to play coachman outside the doors! One of his intimates was a young gentleman of a noble Piedmontese family, and

nephew to Prince Masserano, Spanish Ambassador at the Court of St. James's. The young fellow was an Adonis in his way, and had no troublesome, ill-bred genius in his composition, to make him despise or mistrust the all-sufficing pleasures of a fashionable life. Him, therefore, did our Alfieri drive about London, hither and thither, late and early, to all the places of public and private entertainment frequented by the *beau monde*. He boasts a little of the skill he achieved as a whip, and of being able to hold his own even with the famous London coachmen. Many a time did he extricate himself from a crowd of vehicles waiting for the fine company at Ranelagh or the theatres, and came off with honour, and without damage to the carriage or the cattle. Surely this is as odd a kind of "haunt" as ever tragic poet frequented! Fancy the tall, fair, handsome, well-born Vittorio Alfieri, the future author of the "Antigone" and the "Saul;" the melancholy, moody, sensitive, enthusiastic genius, fighting and struggling, and swearing, and cutting in and out, amidst a mob of periwigged coachmen and powdered lackeys, and a mass of heavy splendid coaches, and a clatter of stamping hoofs and rattling wheels; whilst the fine ladies in hoops and the fine gentlemen in their court-

suits, and with rapiers by their sides, crushed and elbowed each other in the alleys of Ranelagh or on the staircase of some grand mansion in the fashionable purlieus of St. James's!

On leaving England Alfieri passed a short time in Holland, where at the Hague he made the acquaintance of a man of culture and intelligence, in the person of Don José d'Acunha, the Portuguese Minister. This gentleman, besides being the confidant of a love affair of Alfieri's, was his counsellor on points of intellectual study and improvement. He urged him to read assiduously the great Italian poets and the most distinguished prose writers. He also made Alfieri a present of a copy of Machiavelli, which, however, was not read and studied until many years later. Still, d'Acunha must have fanned the smouldering fires of imagination in his young friend to some purpose; for upon Alfieri's return to Turin, after two years of travel, he began to occupy a portion of his days in reading. At Geneva, on his way home, he had bought a trunkful of books—the works of Rousseau, Helvetius, Montesquieu, and others; and these he began to study as soon as he was settled in his sister's house at Turin. Rousseau did not attract him. Voltaire's prose he found delightful,

but his poetry tiresome;—not a bad judgment for an uneducated lad of twenty! Montesquieu he read through twice with wonder, delight, and "perhaps some little improvement." *L'Esprit*, Helvetius's famous work, made a profound but painful impression on him. "But," says Alfieri, "the book of books for me, which made me pass hours of absolute rapture during that winter, was 'Plutarch's Lives.' Some of these, such as Timoleon, Cæsar, Pelopidas, Brutus, Cato, and others, I read over four or five times with such a transport of cries, tears, and sometimes fury, that anyone who should have heard me from an adjoining room would certainly have supposed me to be mad."

In May, 1769, Alfieri, having once more obtained the indispensable permission of the king, set off on a second tour.

This time he travelled to Vienna, passing through Milan, Venice, Trent, Innspruck, Augsburg, and Munich; but staying the shortest possible time at all these places. From Vienna he went, by way of Prague and Dresden, to Berlin; and thus he speaks of his first entrance into the States of Frederick the Great: "The sight of this country, which seemed to be but one vast guard-house, redoubled and tripled

my horror of the infamous trade of soldiering, sole and most infamous foundation of arbitrary authority, which is the necessary fruit of so many thousands of hired satellites. I was presented to the king. I felt on beholding him not the slightest movement of admiration or respect; but, on the contrary, an intense rage and indignation. And these sentiments were increased in me daily by the sight of so many wrong things which impudently pretended to be right! Count Fiüch, the King's Minister, who had presented me, asked me why I, who was in the service of my own king, had not put on my uniforn on that occasion. I replied, because I thought that in that court there were uniforms enough. The king only said to me two or three words of course. I observed him profoundly, respectfully fixing my eyes on his; and I thanked heaven that I was not born his slave. About the middle of November I took myself out of that huge barrack called Prussia, abhorring it very sufficiently."

He pursued his way northward, going to Denmark, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. Of Copenhagen he says it pleased him from a certain air of activity, commerce, industry, and general wellbeing, which reminded him of Holland; and he adds: "Of all

these things not one was to be found in the Prussian States, although Frederick the Great had commanded arts, letters, and industry to flourish *under his shade!*" In May he reached St. Petersburg. He does not enter into much detail respecting things Russian, but some of his words have a certain interest for us now. "I had read Voltaire's history of Peter the Great," he says, "and I had met many Russians in my college days at Turin, and had heard that rising nation greatly magnified. Consequently on my arrival in St. Petersburg I was in an extraordinary palpitation of expectation. But, alas! no sooner had I set foot in that Asiatic encampment of booths drawn up in line, than, remembering Rome, Genoa, Venice, and Florence, I burst out laughing. And all that I subsequently saw in that country only confirmed my first impressions. So much did I dislike everything there (excepting the beards and the horses), that, during my six weeks' sojourn among those barbarians disguised as Europeans, I made acquaintance with nobody; nor would I be presented to the famous autocrat, Catherine II. . . . Seeing the accursed military rabble ruling at St. Petersburg perhaps even more than at Berlin was, no doubt, the cause of my contempt for both those people, and my abhorrence of their infamous rulers

I would not even go to Moscow, as I had at first intended, and longed to get back to Europe (*sic*) without delay. I departed from St. Petersburg towards the end of June, by way of Riga, Königsberg, and Dantzic. The latter city, up to that time rich and free, was beginning in that very year to be tormented by its evil neighbour, the despot of Prussia, who had already caused his vile ruffians to enter it by force. Thus, cursing Russians and Prussians, and all others who, under the mask of men, suffer themselves to be oppressed even as brutes by their tyrants; and spreading abroad on my way my name, age, quality, character, and intentions (for all these things are demanded of you in every village by a sergeant, on your coming in, passing through, staying still, going out!)—thus, I say, I at length reached Berlin for the second time. Passing through Zorendorff, I visited the battlefield of the Russians and Prussians, where so many thousands of both herds were freed from their yoke by leaving their bones there. The vast sepulchral trenches were unmistakably indicated by the thickness and brilliant green of the springing wheat, which in all the rest of that arid and ungrateful soil was coming up miserably sparse and poor. I was forced to make the sad but too true reflection, that

slaves are really born to manure the earth. And all these *Prussianisms* (*questePrussianerie*) made me the more appreciate and long for happy England."

Towards the end of November Alfieri once more arrived in "happy England." But it must be owned that, however highly he valued her public felicity, private existence was not without some considerable troubles and perils even in that blessed island. He gives, at great length, the history of an adventure which made a great noise at the time, and furnished the gossips of the town with savoury fare for many a month. As a mere page of *chronique scandaleuse* the story would not be worth giving; but as a contemporary picture of manners, and a vivid illustration of Alfieri's life and character at that period of his life (ætat. 22), it is curious and interesting.

On this his second visit to London, he fell violently in love with a woman of the first fashion, whom he frequently met at the house of Prince Masserano, the Spanish Ambassador. He had no opportunity of visiting her in her own house, but they saw each other every morning, either in Hyde Park or some other public promenade; every evening, at some crowded rout or at the theatre. And it

was not long before the lady persuaded Alfieri that she returned his passion with equal ardour, and contrived to admit him clandestinely into her house in London during her husband's absence. For the said husband was devoted to his beautiful wife, and "as jealous of her," says Alfieri, "as an Ultramontane knows how to be" (!). In the course of the season—it was in the month of May—the lady was carried by her husband to a country house, some sixteen miles from town, where they were to pass a week or ten days. Immediately the lovers arranged an assignation. The husband was an officer in the Guards, and was obliged to go to town for a grand review, passing the day and night there. Alfieri rode down on horseback to within three miles of the country house, left his steed at a village tavern, and proceeded on foot through a postern-gate giving access to the park (which gate had been purposely left open by the lady) and so to the house; having been, as he imagined, unobserved by any human eye. Emboldened by the success of his first visit, he arranged to go down once more, when the husband should be again called to London by his military duties. But on the day before the second appointment, in leaping his horse over a fence, the animal

fell with him and dislocated his shoulder. The surgeon who was called in to see him, having set the shoulder and bandaged it, naturally bade him remain quietly in his bed. But Alfieri's ardour was not to be so quenched. He insisted on rising the next evening, and with his bandages on, and his arm (the left arm) in a sling, put himself into a postchaise, with one postillion, and set off to keep his appointment. He left the postchaise at the village inn, as he had previously left his horse, and went his way on foot, *with his drawn sword in his hand underneath his cloak*. On reaching the postern-gate he found it fast shut; and this obliged him to climb the park paling—a task which he accomplished with infinite difficulty on account of his crippled arm. But at length he reached the house, where his mistress herself admitted him, and neither of them gave much heed to the circumstance of the postern-gate being fastened, although the lady remembered having opened it with her own hands some hours previous. By dawn the next morning he returned to the inn, where he re-entered his chaise, and was carried back to London by seven o'clock, tormented by pain of mind at having to leave his mistress, and by pain of body from his dislocated shoulder, which the

jolting of the chaise had greatly aggravated. "The surgeon once more bound up my arm," he says, "and I remained in bed, in a state of mind so mad and desperate that I cared for no dangers, though I foresaw many. On the Tuesday evening I would not remain any longer in the house, but went to the Italian Opera, into the box of Prince Masserano, who was there with his wife, and who, having heard of my accident, and supposing me to be crippled in my bed, was immensely surprised to see me walk in, with my arm merely hanging in a sling. I sat there apparently listening to the music, but inwardly a prey to a tempest of feelings, although my face remained, as usual, impassible as marble. All on a sudden I thought I heard my name pronounced by someone at the door of the private box. Mechanically I jumped up, opened the door, and, instantly closing it again behind me, I found myself face to face with the husband of my mistress. I had long anticipated this meeting, and although unable in honour to provoke it myself, had desired it more than anything on earth. 'Here I am,' I cried. 'Who seeks me?' 'I was seeking you,' he answered. 'I have a word to say to you.' 'Let us go,' said I; 'I am ready to hear you.' And without another

word we left the theatre. It was about half-an-hour before the Ave Maria, according to Italian reckoning; as the theatres in London during the long days of May begin about the twenty-two hours." (That is to say, that in the year 1771 our fashionable forefathers went to the Italian Opera about six o'clock of a summer's evening.) "From the Opera House in the Haymarket we proceeded, some distance, to St. James's Park, and from thence by a gate we entered a great meadow called the Green Park. There, as it began to grow dusk, in a retired corner, we drew our swords without further parley. On our way along Pall Mall he had several times reproached me with having come to his house clandestinely, and had interrogated me about it. I merely replied that it was not true, but that if he believed it I was there ready to give him satisfaction. I perceived, however, that he was minutely informed of everything. In the act of drawing our swords he noticed that I had my left arm in a sling, and was generous enough to ask if that would not prevent me from fighting. I thanked him, but answered that I hoped not, and forthwith attacked him. I have always been an extremely bad fencer, and on this occasion I set upon him like a madman, regardless of all rules of art;

and in truth my object was to get myself killed. We hammered away for some time, I thrusting, and he parrying. And I believe that if he did not kill me it was because he wouldn't; and if I did not kill him it was because I couldn't. At length, in parrying a furious lunge of mine, he wounded me slightly between the wrist and the elbow, and, immediately lowering the point of his sword, declared himself satisfied, and asked me if I were so also. I replied that I was not the offended party, and that the matter rested with him. Whereupon he at once sheathed his sword; I did the same, and he walked away. Having lingered a moment to examine my wound, and finding it a mere scratch, I bound it up as well as I could with a handkerchief by the help of my teeth—for I could not use my left arm—and, moved by I know not what wild folly, returned to the Opera and to Prince Masserano's box. He inquired why I had rushed out so suddenly, and where I had been. I answered that I had remembered an appointment, and said no more. But in spite of all my self-command I was in a state of the most violent agitation, thinking what might be the results of that affair, and especially how it might injure my mistress. After about a quarter-of-an-hour, therefore. I left the

theatre." The rest of the story may be briefly told. The injured husband, having irrefragable proof of his wife's infidelity, resolved to obtain a divorce, which in fact he did; the suit being brought by "the Right Honourable Edward Ligonier, Esquire, Viscount Ligonier of the Kingdom of Ireland," against "Vittorio Amadeo Alfieri, otherwise Count Vittorio Amadeo Alfieri." And at first Alfieri in his infatuation rejoiced at the idea of marrying Lady Ligonier. But the wretched woman was soon compelled by circumstances of public notoriety to confess herself guilty of conduct which repelled Alfieri with horror. She was, in fact, a thoroughly depraved woman, who had deceived both husband and lover, and had degraded herself by a *liaison* with one of Lord Ligonier's grooms. Thus ended this singular episode in our poet's life. Viscount Ligonier refused to ruin Alfieri by heavy damages, as he had refrained from running him through with his rapier in the Green Park; and this moderation Alfieri acknowledges, though not without a half-suppressed sneer.

In 1772 Alfieri returned to Turin. The succeeding years up to 1777 may be briefly passed over. They brought the gradual awakening of the poetic faculty in him, and witnessed his first literary effort.

This was a tragedy on the subject of Cleopatra, of which he himself speaks very slightingly, as a juvenile production full of errors and unworthy of preservation. He visited Florence, Parma, Pisa, and Siena, becoming daily more sensitive to their artistic beauties, and more appreciative of their historic glories. But in the year 1777 he began a connection which was destined to be lifelong.

The name of Louisa Countess of Albany is as indissolubly connected with that of Vittorio Alfieri as is Laura's with Petrarch, or Eleonora's with Tasso. She was the daughter of Gustavus Adolphus, Prince of Stolberg-Gedern, and the wife of Charles Edward, son of the Chevalier St. George, the Pretender. On the occasion of her marriage her bridegroom presented her with a medal bearing the inscription, "Louisa, Queen of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, 1772." But however gratifying such a medal may have been to the vanity of a bride of twenty, she had to pay no cheap price for it. Without entering into the maze of gossip and scandal which surrounded her in Rome, it is undoubted that her husband was an habitual drunkard, and that her life with him was unhappy in every respect. It was in Florence, in the year 1777, as I have said, that Alfieri

formed a passionate attachment to this lady, which she appears to have reciprocated. And to the end of his life he expressed the greatest devotion and esteem for her, and declares in more than one passage of the autobiography that she was not only a loving companion in his domestic hours, but that she encouraged and inspired on all occasions the highest efforts of his muse. Indeed, from this time forward he dedicated himself wholly to a literary life. But in order to do this it was necessary for him to find some means of overcoming certain obstacles. There existed at that time a law in Piedmont which ran thus: "It shall moreover be forbidden to anyone whosoever" (of course to any Piedmontese subject, that is) "to print books or other writings out of our States without the leave of the Censors, on pain of a fine of sixty *scudi*, or more, and of *corporal punishment*, should such be deemed necessary by way of public example." "Add to this," says Alfieri, "that other law which says: 'The vassals inhabiting our States shall not be allowed to absent themselves from the same without our written permission,' and it will be seen that I could not continue to be at once a vassal of the king and an author." Under these circumstances he determined, after much reflection, to make a donation

of the whole of his estates in Piedmont to his sister, the Countess Cumiana, securing them to her children after her, and reserving to himself during his lifetime an annual income equal to about six hundred pounds sterling. Moreover, from the sale of some other property, plate, and furniture, belonging to him in Turin, he realised a sum of some three or four hundred pounds sterling in ready cash. During the long and difficult and tedious negotiations which preceded the final settlement of this affair, there was a moment when Alfieri conceived the possibility of his being left absolutely destitute of means; and he then with all the fervour of his imagination began to picture to himself what method he could resort to to earn his living (literature in that time and country clearly would not suffice); and he says that he thought the trade he was best fit for was that of a *horse-breaker*, "in which I am, or think myself, a master; and it certainly is one of the least servile. And I thought, moreover, that that business would be more easily combined with my profession of poet than any other, since it is far easier to write tragedies in a stable than in a court." A true touch of satiric bitterness!

However, as it turned out, there was no need for the author of "Orestes" to resort to the ancient and

classic art of horse-breaking for his livelihood. The donation to the Countess Cumiana was made in due form, and Alfieri found himself, for the first time in his life, a free man. And finally the death of her husband rendered the Countess of Albany entirely mistress of her own conduct. This took place in Rome, in 1788; but the Countess and Alfieri had been living together in Paris for some time previously. Alfieri's object in establishing himself in a city and a nation which he abhorred was to superintend the printing of his poetical and other works, at the press of Beaumarchais. Beaumarchais' chief printing establishment was at Kehl, but he himself resided in Paris, and Alfieri had all the proofs of his works sent to him regularly for correction to the latter city. Here he established himself in the Faubourg St. Germain, in the street of *Mount Parnassus*—a singularly felicitous name! He was wholly occupied with writing, and correcting the proofs of his writings, some of which he had printed by Didot: notably the ode entitled "Paris un-Bastilled" (*Parigi Sbastigliato*), written by him as an eye-witness of that stormy time.

One of Alfieri's great griefs was to behold the noble principles of liberty which he had always

ardently upheld travestied by vile and ignorant men; and the cause of freedom throughout the world thrown into discredit by the outrages and excesses of that tremendous outbreak called the Great French Revolution. He longed day by day to leave Paris; but the interests of the Countess Albany detained her there. He also had invested the greater part of what property remained to him after the donation to his sister, in France; and so they lingered on there. Day by day their difficulties and dangers increased, however. The wretched paper-money which had replaced specie payments diminished in value with frightful rapidity. And the mutterings of the revolutionary tempest swelled into a menacing roar. In the August of 1792 took place the famous attack on the Tuileries, and the massacre of the Swiss Guards. Alfieri at once perceived the imminence of the danger which hung over the heads of the Countess of Albany and himself, and determined at any sacrifice to fly from Paris.

With infinite difficulty they obtained passports for themselves and their servants, and had decided to start on August 20th. But finding all was in readiness earlier, and being moved by a strong presentiment of evil, Alfieri anticipated the day of

departure and set out on the 18th, in the afternoon, he and the Countess, and their suite, in two travelling carriages loaded with luggage. Their way lay through the Barrière Blanche, as being the nearest route to Calais, whither they were bound. At the barrier they found only three or four soldiers of the National Guard and one officer. These men having examined the passports, and finding them in order, were about to open "the gate of that huge prison," as Alfieri says, and let them pass on their way. But close to the barrier there was a low wine-shop, from whence all of a sudden there issued forth some thirty ragged vagabonds, drunk and furious. These fellows, seeing two carriages richly laden and a train of servants, fell to crying that all the wealthy wanted to fly from Paris, and to carry away their property, and to leave them (the populace) in wretchedness and poverty. Then ensued a noisy altercation between the three or four soldiers and the thirty or forty men of the mob: the former insisting that the fugitives should be allowed to pass, the latter that they should be detained. Meanwhile a greater crowd was gathering around the two vehicles, and voices were heard suggesting that they should be attacked with showers of stones or set on fire! The most moderate proposition was that

the aristocrats should be dragged back to the Hôtel de Ville; and had this been acted upon, there is scarcely the shadow of a doubt that Alfieri and his companion would have ended their days on the scaffold. But finally, by Alfieri's courage and persistence (he says he was too angry and excited to consider the enormous peril which hung over him from moment to moment), by his jumping out amidst the crowd, showing them his passports, declaring that he was a foreigner, out-screaming and out-swearing them, he fairly tired them out. In a momentary lull or relaxation of the energies of the mob, the guards saw their opportunity, signed to Alfieri to re-enter his coach, opened the barrier, and bade the postillions whip forward. And so they galloped out of Paris, pursued by the hisses, howls, insults, and maledictions of the rabble.

The terror of those horrible minutes had prostrated the Countess of Albany, so that she was fain to rest and recruit her shattered nerves for a month at Brussels with a married sister of hers, although both she and Alfieri were eagerly desirous to put a still greater distance between themselves and France, and to cross the Alps into Italy. Letters from Paris soon proved how right had been the instinct or presenti-

ment which had induced Alfieri to hasten their departure; for on the very day they had first fixed upon to start (August 20th) the members of their "Section," who had given their passports, came in a body to prevent their leaving Paris, and to convey the Countess Albany to prison! Then followed in quick succession the horrors which all the world knows of; so that our two fugitives were beyond measure thankful to have escaped as they did. But they by no means got off scot-free; for all the property they had left behind them—horses, furniture, books, everything—was confiscated, and their names were struck off the rolls of the public debt, as *émigrés* (which, of course, they were not, being foreign subjects), and they were thus deprived of all the income they had derived from French sources.

At length, travelling by way of Aix-la-Chapelle, Frankfort, and Innspruck, they crossed the Alps into Italy, and on November 3rd arrived in Florence, from whence the poet removed no more. Early in the following year (1793) Alfieri and the Countess established themselves in Casa Gianfigliazzi, on the sunny Lung' Arno, near to the bridge of Santa Trinità. A marble tablet on the outer wall of this house records that Vittorio Alfieri, the tragic poet, inhabited it, and died

in it. And few visitors to Florence can have failed to notice the spot. This, then, was the last tranquil retreat of our poet's agitated life. Here, happy in the society of the woman whom he loved, and of a few chosen friends, and, above all, in the company of the mighty dead whose works he studied with the passionate fervour that belonged to his character, he passed his last years. In 1797 he undertook to teach himself Greek! The task was a hard one, for several reasons: his age—he was now forty-eight; his lack of natural facility in acquiring languages, and of any systematic knowledge of grammar; and a physical difficulty he experienced in fixing and following with his eyes the minute and complex Greek character. But his indomitable will vanquished all obstacles, and within two years he was able to read and understand the principal Greek authors, and to revel in the new paradise of poetry thus opened to his mind. Besides enjoying the works of others, he composed several of his own masterpieces during this period: amongst them the tragedy of "Alcestis," partly imitated from Euripides.

A brief illness, aggravated, it was thought, by over-work and a mistaken system of abstinence in diet, terminated his life at the age of fifty-four. He

died on October 8th, 1803, in his house at Florence, lovingly attended to the last moment by the Countess of Albany. The scope of the present paper is not to examine Alfieri's works or characterise the special nature of his poetic genius. It has only been attempted to indicate within the limits at command some of the stranger and more striking incidents of his many wanderings. But it may be asserted that Vittorio Alfieri always aimed at the highest species of poetry; firmly avoided the tendency of his contemporary countrymen towards a weak diffuseness of style, and the substitution of sound for sense; did much to bring back a taste for the virile and intense brevity of Dante and the Latin writers; and never prostituted his great powers to flatter injustice and tyranny, whether they were crowned with the diadem of the Bourbons or the red cap of the *Sans-culottes*.

GIUSEPPE GIUSTI.

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IN order fully to appreciate the scope and influence of Giusti's writings, it is necessary to understand something of the political condition of Italy in general, and Tuscany in particular, in his day. Giuseppe Giusti was born in Monsummano, a townlet in the Val di Nievole between Pescia and Pistoja, on May 13th, 1809. His father and mother belonged to respectable Tuscan families, and were in easy circumstances, although not rich. Wit and intelligence appear to have been hereditary in both sides of the house. His paternal grandfather was a friend and minister of the Tuscan Grand Duke, Peter Leopold, and assisted him in drawing up that code—the famous Leopoldine laws—which was a model of liberal statesmanship unexampled in its time on the Continent. Giusti's maternal grandfather, Celestino Chiti, was an

intimate friend of the historian Sismondi, and in 1799 adhered with his friend to the Republican party, and shared Sismondi's dangers and imprisonment. The early years of Giusti's life were uneventful. In 1826, being then seventeen years old, he was entered as a student at the University of Pisa, where he remained three years, contracting numerous debts, learning somewhat of men and manners, and incredibly little of the classics or of law, to which he was specially designed by his father to devote himself.

After three years of this life his father withdrew him from the University in disgust, and he returned to the paternal home, then established at Pescia. After some time spent there in no more profitable fashion than the three years at Pisa, his father gave him another chance, paid his debts on the express condition that he should make no new ones, and sent him back to the University. This was towards the end of 1832. At that period the whole peninsula of Italy was quivering through and through with the subterranean fires of revolution. They had burst forth fiercely in many places, and had been as fiercely stamped out. But they were only hidden, not quenched. What the condition of the country was may be conceived from the following bare outline of facts.

In the year 1831 there were revolutionary outbreaks in the following places: Modena, Reggio, Parma, Bologna, Forli, Rimini, Cesena, Ferrara, Pesaro, Urbino, Ancona, Perugia, Spoleto, Terni, Narni, Otricoli; with partial and unsuccessful attempts at conspiracy and revolt in Savoy and Piedmont, and a threatening revolutionary spirit in the kingdom of Naples, which called forth sternly repressive measures on the part of the Government. Tuscany alone remained outwardly tranquil, although surrounded on all sides by the conflagration. But it needs not to be said that in Tuscany also the spirit of liberalism and patriotism was awake, and that many a heart thrilled with aspirations after national unity, which neither the tongue nor the pen dared to utter. Such sentiments were naturally rife among the University students, and Giusti, one of the foremost "liberals" of them all, at this time wrote a song which they used to sing in chorus, beginning:

Fratelli, sorgete,
La patria vi chiama,

("Arise, brothers, our country calls"), which excited as much enthusiasm as though it had been a *chef-d'œuvre* of poetry, instead of, in truth, a collection of well-worn phrases strung together and rhymed.

Some half-pathetic, half-ludicrous incidents of this time are narrated by Signor Frassi in the biography of our poet prefixed to the collection of his letters published in Florence by Le Monnier in 1863. The general enthusiasm and sympathy for the patriots who had suffered in the good cause were so great, that it was no unusual thing for these generous lads to deprive themselves of food, in order to assist needy emigrants and refugees. The students of the University of Pisa were not then, and are not now, oppressed with more money than they know what to do with. But as was natural, all manner of swindlers, vagabonds, and idle rascals, found the trade of playing patriot a light and lucrative one under these circumstances, and many were the impostors who played on Giusti and his friends. One gentleman appeared among them in dress clothes, with a cambric shirt and straw-coloured gloves, declaring that he had fled in that costume from a ball, where he was in danger of being arrested. He was generously assisted, and the next day he was seen at a gaming-table oblivious of his fears of arrest, and playing recklessly! Another arrived one evening bringing a letter of introduction from a friend of some of the students. This patriot was ragged, and

wore green spectacles and a shade over his eyes His first proceeding was to carefully close all the doors; his next, to inform the young men confidentially that he was wounded. "Wounded!" they exclaimed in chorus. "Good heavens! Where?" "Here, in this arm. And the worst is, that the bullet has remained in the wound. Only feel." They did so, and perceived a round hard substance under their fingers, beneath the patriot's shabby coat-sleeve. He had been in some engagement, had valorously defended a bridge against the enemy, had leaped upon the parapet to encourage his comrades, been hit by a ball there, lost his balance, and fallen into the river, from whence he issued alive, indeed, but with the seeds of a fearful inflammation of the eyes amongst other afflictions. Hence the green spectacles and the shade. "By Jove," exclaimed Giusti, "this is not a case for grudging economy! This is a hero; we must assist him!" "But quickly, quickly," put in the hero, "for I have the myrmidons at my heels!" Which latter statement turned out to be exactly true; for the next morning the friend who had recommended him announced that the patriot had stolen all his spoons, and that the police were looking for him to put him in prison.

To his honour be it said, these experiences did not quench Giusti's political enthusiasm. But they doubtless helped to give him that sobriety of judgment in things political which in later years drew on him the distrust and disapprobation of both the extreme parties. As he had never flattered despotism in any shape, when petty despots were powerful in Italy, so he refused to flatter the mob when "Liberalism" was able for awhile to raise its head. He had as great a horror of the prating demagogue as of the right-divine tyrants in duodecimo, whom the demagogue railed against. In this respect he may be compared with Belli, who often seemed to find the revolutionary remedies for absolutism worse than the disease. Indeed, it may be assumed in general that your satirist, although he powerfully aids the cause of reform, can scarcely himself be a practical reformer. A keen sense of the ridiculous can never be limited to one side of a question; and the men who have led popular movements to any great result have possessed a certain blind force of enthusiasm which is impervious to "sensible arguments," and wastes none of its power in discussing expediency or analysing motives.

In 1834 he obtained his degree of Doctor of Law

at the University of Pisa. By his own confession, the examination was the merest farce, and it is certain that he had never undergone one week's real study to obtain it. He immediately went to Florence, and made some show of practising the law, under the auspices of the advocate Capoquadri; but in fact he did nothing seriously to that end. He passed his mornings in studying Dante, and his evenings in amusing himself. Meanwhile his poetic genius stirred within him, and urged him to various literary attempts, but as yet without a clear direction, and with infinite self-distrust and despondency. Perceiving, as he clearly did, that every one of the great poets had a decided physiognomy of his own, which distinguished him from all others, and failing to find any such marked characteristic in himself, he came to the conclusion that his mind was one of the most ordinary and prosaic in the world. But his biographer observes, "That was all *dans les règles*. No one can be original except on condition of not knowing that he is so." A somewhat disputable proposition. One may say, however, that no one can be original by dint of trying to be so. Still, notwithstanding his own misgivings and the frank discouragement of his father, who constantly repeated to him, "What would

you have? Don't you see that all the places for the sermon are taken?"* he nevertheless did write several pieces during this time. Most of them he refused to have republished, and, so to speak, disowned them. Two pieces only, the Elegy to Carlo Falugi and the lines to Padre Bernardo da Siena, are included in Le Monnier's authorised edition of Giusti's poems.

But in the autumn of 1835, a new and powerful sentiment came to inspire our poet and mature his genius through joy and sorrow, both intensely felt. He fell deeply in love with a lady at Lucca, of whom nothing more is related in the story of his life than that he loved her, that she appeared for a time to return his love, and finally forgot or deserted him. To her are addressed the tender lines entitled "*All' amica lontana*" ("To my absent mistress"). And Signor Frassi is of opinion that after her abandonment of him, his practical efforts received a strong impetus "from the desire to merit at least the admiration of her whose affection he had lost for ever." One of his sonnets seems to indicate clearly that this love of his was not the least of the motives which urged him to write. In it he says that, being deprived of the sight of that angelic and serene

* A proverbial phrase, signifying that there is no opening for newcomers.

countenance, he follows a serious thought which urged him to quit terrestrial and trivial things, and sets himself to strive for fame among his papers. "Then, if fortune should grant me this boon, and make my name renowned, I will return lovingly to her and say, 'My studies, my honours, and my fame are all your work,' and lay my poems at her feet."

However, *l'appétit vient en mangeant*; and whatever may have given the first impulse to his desire for fame, it may be pretty safely concluded that his lady-love's part in the matter became more and more insignificant, as the world in general more and more liberally bestowed on him its applause. The first composition which revealed his real talent was the *Dies iræ*, written on the death of the Austrian Emperor Francis I. The newness of its form, the audacity of its sentiments—or at least of their *expression*; for the sentiments were shared by many thousands in Italy—and the unexampled use of the familiar vernacular in a composition which, though in a jesting garb, had a serious scope, puzzled and astonished many sage critics. Signor Frassi says that the young fellows and the women, who give their opinion without *arrière pensée*, pronounced it novel, admirable, useful. But the pedants shook their heads. The poem expresses undisguised re-

joicing at the death of the Austrian Emperor, and points to the signs of the times throughout the whole of Europe as indicating Liberal tendencies. To this poem succeeded the *Legge penale per gl' Impiegati* (Penal Law against Civil Servants), *Lo Stivale* (The Boot), *A San Giovanni* (an address to the figure of St. John stamped on the Tuscan gold coin called a *ruspone*), *Il Brindisi* (The Toast), and *L'Apologia del Lotto* (An Apology for the Lottery).

L'Incoronazione (The Coronation) was the poem which first established his fame on a solid basis. It was written in 1838, on the occasion of the Austrian Emperor Ferdinand receiving the Iron Crown in Milan Cathedral. The poem is a tremendous satire upon almost all the reigning sovereign princes of Italy; and in many instances their leading characteristics are hit off with astonishing felicity in a few lines. Giusti says himself of the *Incoronazione*: "This poem rises somewhat above the others, and is a kind of satire which touches on the domain of lyric poetry. It may appear to be too *parti-coloured* to those persons who do not consider that on that occasion (the coronation of the Emperor Ferdinand) the personages—both actors and spectators—were ridiculous, and the facts serious. . . . The author

could not treat the persons gravely, nor the things burlesquely!" The figure of the Grand-Duke Leopold the Second of Tuscany is admirably drawn with a few pen-strokes: as is also in a certain sense the allegory of the sleepy, comfortable little country he ruled over. Tuscany was truly somnolent in those days; but there were dreamers who stirred in their sleep—that was the dangerous part of it!

Il Toscano Morfeo vien lemme lemme
Di papaveri cinto, e di lattuga,
Che per la smania d'eternarsi asciuga
Tasche e Maremme.
Co' Tribunali e co' Catasti annaspa;
E benchè snervi i popoli col sonno,
Quando si sogna d'imitare il nonno,
Qualcosa raspa.

The following English version of these lines is taken from a review of Giusti's poems published in *The Athenæum* in 1856:

Slow reels the Tuscan Morpheus, all a-dream,
Lettuce and poppy crowned. 'Tis he who drains
Marshes and pockets too, so hard he strains
For lasting fame.
'Tis he with taxes and tribunals many
Winds round his land and makes it faint with sleep,
And when his grandsire's path he thinks to keep,
Still turns a penny.

That this is not a caricature, but a portrait, many who still remember the Grand Duke in the "good old times" can testify. But such as he was, many neighbouring states, cowering under the lively rule of King Stork, looked enviously at the Tuscans blest with so peaceable a King Log.

Giusti's social satires are amongst the best of his writings. He has left us inimitable pictures of various classes of Florentines — lazy, phlegmatic, cunning, unscrupulous, self-indulgent, and time-serving. But none the less was he a good Italian, and a good Tuscan *par-dessus le marché.* He loved his country with so proud and sensitive an affection, that the faults of her less deserving children afflicted and irritated him keenly. He protested against the hollow doctrines of cosmopolitanism and humanitarianism, which were in the mouths of so many merely a convenient excuse for neglecting duties near at hand. Many of Giusti's utterances on this subject recall Béranger's lines beginning: "*J'aime qu'un Russe soit Russe,*" with the refrain, "*Amis, soyons Français!*" One of his pieces written in 1847, entitled *I Discorsi che corrono* (Talk of the Day), is in the form of a dialogue, and characteristically represents the tone of mind of many *laudatores*

temporis acti, when they found themselves compelled to yield to the new "Liberal" ideas of the day. Especially did it seem monstrous to old-fashioned Government *employés*, that these pestilent innovators should expect them to earn their pay! Was ever such a thing heard of? The civil service, and the country, and the world in general were at a pretty pass, when gentlemen were required to do *bonâ fide* work in return for their salaries! Remembering the Circumlocution Office of our own great humourist, we need not, perhaps, be too severe on the views of the Florentine ex-official, as set forth in the *Discorsi che corrono.* The conversation is conducted in the full-flavoured Florentine vernacular, stuffed with proverbial phrases and local allusions: many of them untranslatable. In the good old days, as Signor Ventola, one of the interlocutors, proceeds to point out, one way and another, the civil servants had a pretty good time of it. "By dint of coming half-an-hour too late, of going away half-an-hour too soon, and dawdling through another half-hour before you began your work, you managed to reduce the day's labour pretty considerably. Then, every fortnight or so, there was the doctor's certificate that you required a day's holiday; and at somewhat

longer intervals, you obtained a month's leave of absence for change of air!" This is not an exaggerated picture of the way in which public affairs were conducted, *regnante* Leopoldo Secondo, Grand Duke of Tuscany, as many trustworthy witnesses can testify. Ventola brings forward as the climax of his accusations against the Liberals, their animosity towards the Jesuits. And he characteristically observes that to assail folks who are able to eat you up alive (as he is convinced the Jesuits can) is the height of rash imprudence. With Italians —and perhaps especially with Florentines—of a certain stamp, *imprudence* is equivalent to an epitome of all the vices.

The collected letters of Giusti, edited by his friend Giovanni Frassi, form a couple of pleasant volumes. There are descriptions in them of sundry phases of country life in Tuscany and the neighbouring states, which are curious and interesting. Giusti was fond of walking: a taste which he attributes to the precept and example of his childhood's tutor, a certain priest who made him tramp many a mile, often very unwillingly. Howbeit, Giusti retained a love for pedestrian exercise, and made many journeys on foot among the secluded hill districts of the Pistojese

and Lucca. As a specimen of a state of things which increased facility of communication and the persistent current of time are rapidly abolishing, we may give a brief outline of a "ball" at a country house, the residence of a certain notary not far from Pescia. Giusti describes it in the letter addressed to "Pietro ———," without a surname, which letter is No. 51 of Frassi's collection, and must have been written about the year 1840. Giusti and his friend appeared at the festivity in velveteen shooting-jackets and thick shoes, having been invited on the highway, where they chanced to meet their host. But it does not appear that their costume was looked upon as unfit for the occasion. The guests were a very motley assemblage. There were the *curato* (parish priest), the doctor, the chemist, the village lawyer, and the mayor; and mingled with these in democratic familiarity, the tailor, the blacksmith, the shoemaker, the stone-mason, the oil-merchant, and the fishmonger, besides a number of male and female peasants, who had probably been ploughing or digging all the morning. The elders and the notables, such as the priest, the mayor, and the doctor, sat down to play at cards. The younger guests were ranged round a great hall on the ground-floor, paved with

bricks, and lighted with tallow candles stuck in tin sconces against the wall, which was the ball-room. The orchestra—an erection of rough boards and beams partly tied together with ropes—was placed halfway up the doorway which gave ingress to the ball-room, so as to cut off half its height. Here was stationed a servant, "somewhat savage in face and costume, but of extremely humane manners," as Giusti says, whose office was not to announce the guests by name, as any ignorant city-bred person might have supposed, but to warn all those who entered to duck their heads as they passed, so as to avoid cracking their crowns against the orchestra. This he did in a cheerful voice, mingling his advertisements with sallies of wit from time to time, as one or other of his personal acquaintances appeared on the scene: "Down with that thick pate of thine, blockhead, or thou'lt knock over the fiddlers!" "Look out for your top-knots, girls, or good-bye to your frizzled curls!" and such sportive observations. The *buffet* was the huge kitchen, where a great fire was blazing; the chief cook was roasting chestnuts in an iron pan, and his female aides-de-camp were plucking fowls to be roasted presently. In the centre stood a huge table, on which were ranged all manner of

flasks and bottles, a great dish of *brigidini* (a sort of biscuit common in Tuscany), cheeses, polenta, a cheese-grater, and a hat. The latter was a *hors d'œuvre* placed there no one knew by whom, and which nobody thought of removing. The draughts of air which gamboled through the big kitchen carried the feathers of the plucked birds hither and thither, and deposited them playfully on all the eatables, as well as on the heads and shoulders of the company. This circumstance gave rise to some lively interchange of repartee between the cook at the fireplace and his feminine assistants. One of the latter being sensibly touched by the reproach that in her carelessness or awkwardness, or both, she was causing a too copious *pluie de plumes*, rose indignantly from her task, threw down a fat thrush on which she had been engaged, and announced that those might pick birds who would; she resigned the ungrateful task. But lo! the master of the house, the Signor Notaro, comes to the rescue, seizes the basket with the five or six birds which remain, and plucks them himself in the twinkling of an eye. And all this *coram publico*, with the guests walking in and out, laughing, talking, eating, and drinking. The dancing was hearty, if not elegant. The chief dances were

the national *manfrina*, and quadrilles. They did try a waltz, but that new-fangled performance was not a success. The good people turned dizzy after a round or two, and, being compelled to stop abruptly, caused confusion, and much promiscuous bumping and banging. And the couples stood convulsively grasping each other's hands, and with difficulty preserving their balance. But in spite of so much that was ludicrous, Giusti justly eulogises the modest simplicity and utter absence of pretension which distinguished all these good folks. Affectation is still a rare and exotic plant in Italy. Long may it continue to be so!

In the year 1845 Giusti paid a visit to Milan, when he was the guest of Alessandro Manzoni, the illustrious author of the *Promessi Sposi*. Giusti and Manzoni had been in correspondence for some time previously, but had not hitherto met, and their personal acquaintance seems to have been a source of pleasure to both. In Milan, Giusti remained for a month, enjoying the society of his host, and of such men as Grossi, Torti, Rossari, Rosmini, and other distinguished men of letters. The winter of '45–46, he passed in Pisa in the house of his friend and

biographer, Giovanni Frassi, and in the society of several congenial friends, most of them college companions. Cheerfulness, tranquillity, and sympathy made this winter a specially happy one for Giusti. His health improved, and his poetic vein revived. During this period he wrote several of his best pieces, and made the rough drafts of others, which he never completed. The following winter he returned to Pisa, and remained there until April, 1847.

This was a period of transition for Italy; a period of sanguine hopes, of dreams of unity and liberty, of a general stir and new life throughout the nation, like the spring-time stirring of the sap in a mighty tree. Giovanni Mastai ascended the Papal throne under the title of Pius the Ninth. The first acts of his reign were acts of clemency—pardons, amnesties, magnanimous proclamations. Cries of *Viva Pio Nono* were heard from one end of the peninsula to the other. The nation believed with childlike credulity that its strong new wine could be safely contained in the ancient bottles. Many men who had held republican and antipapal convictions sacrificed their individual opinions, in order not to oppose the great current of Liberalism which they believed to have set

in with the advent of the new Pontiff. Of these was Giuseppe Giusti. He has been censured for political inconsistency on this score. But in truth his only error was to believe that, under peculiarly favourable circumstances, thistles *might* bear grapes; and it was a generous mistake which was shared by many thousands of the best minds amongst his countrymen. The National Guard was instituted (*Guardia Civica*), and Giusti was made Major of the National Guard of Pescia. He accepted the position against his will, and in compliance with the enthusiastic insistence of his fellow-citizens, although he felt that he was in some respects quite unfit for it. As he humorously says in a letter to the Marquis Gino Capponi, bearing date November 24th, 1847: "I might run the risk in giving the word of command, when it came to "Present arms!" ("*Presentate arme!*") of shouting instead, "*Arma virumque cano*,"—to the great scandal of our new militia, who, however much they may vaunt themselves as belonging to the Latin race, I don't think would care to be commanded in Virgilian hemistichs."

The malady which was slowly devouring his life, and of which he died not very long after, prevented

him from accompanying his regiment when hostilities with Austria broke out in '48. This was a real pain and mortification to him. He laments it bitterly in a letter to the Marchesa Luisa d'Azeglio, and in other letters of this period. The public disasters which succeeded to those days of hope and heroism aggravated his disorder, which was tubercular consumption of the lungs. He was discouraged, grieved, hurt to the quick. Austria was again triumphant in Lombardy, the sovereign princes and princelings of the peninsula lifted their heads again, and "order reigned" throughout Italy. In the summer of '49 Giusti went to Viareggio to try if the sea-air would benefit him. But the benefit, if there were any, was of brief duration. On his return to Florence in the following autumn he was assailed by a terrible miliary fever, which hastened and aggravated the symptoms of consumption. Notwithstanding his bodily infirmities, he continued to work at his poems, and especially devoted himself with ardour to a Commentary on Dante, on which he was engaged up to almost the day of his death. He was the guest in Florence of Gino Capponi, in whose house he died. Signor Frassi says: "Whoever visited him in

the *palazzo* of Gino Capponi during those last days of his life was almost sure to find him in his bed nearly buried beneath a heap of books, and with the coverlet littered with all sorts of *codices* and documents." His mind was clear and tranquil, and he was serenely prepared to meet the end. The end came somewhat suddenly at last, although it had been long foreseen. On March 30th, 1850, at four o'clock in the afternoon, he was suffocated by the breaking of a blood-vessel on the lungs, being then within a few weeks of completing his forty-first year.

His body was carried to the ancient and picturesque church of San Miniato al Monte, the grand panoramic view from which all visitors to Florence must remember, and is there buried. A memorial tablet bears the following inscription:

"Here rest in God the mortal remains of Giuseppe Giusti, who from the graces of our living idiom drew a form of poetry never before attempted; and sharply castigating vice, without diminishing the faith in virtue, elevated men's minds in the service of noble affections and generous words. Hence was he honoured and wept by Italy when, in the flower of manhood, he was torn from her by an insidious malady." Then

followed the dates of his birth and death (the former given erroneously as the 9th instead of the 13th of May) and a few pathetic words setting forth that his father, the Cavaliere Domenico Giusti, had deposited in that tomb his only male offspring, prop and glory of his name.

GIUSEPPE BELLI.

GIUSEPPE BELLI.

THERE are certain points of resemblance between Giuseppe Belli the Roman, and Giuseppe Giusti the Tuscan, poet. They both uttered stinging sarcasms against principalities and powers; they both wrote in the *lingua parlata*, the spoken vernacular of their respective countries; the fame of both has undoubtedly grown and spread within the last decade, which has done so much for the social unification of Italy, and has consequently diminished certain local reputations, and, on the other hand, exalted others into national fame.

Yet the resemblance does not go very deep into the two men's minds. Belli—I speak of the poet, and exclusively of the poet of the *dialetto romanesco*—had the sardonic roughness of genuine Roman sarcasm, which, as an Italian friend of mine once observed to me, is

like a *stilettata*—a dagger-thrust. The wit is often coarse-grained, and its virile force not unseldom verges on brutality. The Tuscan, on the other hand, makes his stroke with a highly polished lancet. As regards intellect and culture, Giusti must be allowed to be considerably the superior of the Roman poet; but I think that, as a purely literary figure, Belli is the more remarkable of the two. One may find many parallels in literature for Giusti. His biographer Signor Giovanni Frassi, in fact, frequently and felicitously compares him with Béranger; but what Belli did remains almost unique.

A really complete account of the Homes and Haunts of Giuseppe Giovacchino Belli would comprise a curious and minute description of the City of Rome from the beginning of the present century to within twenty years ago; for Belli, the poet of the Roman vernacular, was as completely the child of the Eternal City as was Balzac of Paris, or Dickens of London. Its streets, its alleys, its churches, its taverns, its theatres, its gates, its sunny *piazze*, and its gloomy palaces, were the habitat not only of his body, but of his mind. These he knew; these he has described and preserved for us in a hundred incisive phrases. The *genius loci* has never found more complete and

graphic expression than in his sonnets (upwards of eight hundred in number!) written in the so-called *dialetto romanesco.* The Roman populace lives, and breathes, and moves before us in Belli's verses with a veracity and vitality perhaps unequalled in literature. Indeed, this veracity of his is, in an immense number of cases, fatal to artistic excellence. His sonnets are mostly literal reproductions of the Actual, without perspective or atmosphere—almost without selection. They are as uncompromisingly and staringly real as the figures on a Japanese fan.

But though this be a literary defect, it is precious in the eyes of the historian and psychologist. And, in fact, the sonnets of Belli contain in themselves the materials for a profound study of the idiosyncrasies, superstitions, ignorances, virtues, and vices of the genuine Roman *popolano*—a type which, in its distinctive characteristics, is rapidly disappearing. It must, however, be understood, that some of the sonnets have very considerable poetic excellence, besides the dominant quality of fidelity to fact—such, for instance, as "Er Deserto," "La Famijja Poverella." "La Bbona Moiie." and others. Belli nas written a consideraDle numDer oi poems in good Italian. But these, speaking generally, may be dis-

missed as being mediocre, when they do not fall below mediocrity. He has written nothing in Romanesco except in the shape of sonnets; and the ease with which he has handled this difficult form, the absolute spontaneity of the phrases, which flow on without forced inversions or far-fetched expressions, precisely as they might—and do, daily—issue from the mouths of the Trasteverini, is nothing short of marvellous. He seems to be fulfilling his vocation—doing that which he was born to do.

The biography of Belli offers little of interest for the general reader. He was born on September 10th, 1791, of a respectable middle-class family. His father was an accountant. His mother belonged to a family of bankers, and one of her brothers had a bank at Naples. A circumstance which occurred when our poet was a little child had a lasting and disastrous influence on his fortunes, and probably on his character. It was, briefly, this:

The Republic being proclaimed at Rome, under the auspices of the French, Caroline of Austria, wife of Ferdinand IV., King of Naples, sent to Rome on a secret mission a certain General Gennaro Valentini, a remarkably handsome young man, and, says Belli, "much attached to the Queen" (*di lei molto amorevole*).

The object of Valentini's coming was to concert measures for destroying *that formidable hydra with its poisonous tongues*—in plain terms, to get the better by force and cunning of the republican and revolutionary movement which was then (1798) threatening to swallow up all Italy. The words in italics are Belli's, and occur in an unfinished MS. containing some data for his own biography which he left behind him at his death. Valentini was a cousin of Belli's father, and was received into his house with affectionate hospitality, not without some risk to its inmates. Valentini's mission ended tragically. A formidable force arrived at Rome from Naples, of which General Valentini was named Commander-in-chief. On this, throwing aside all disguise, he openly went forth as the enemy of the Republic, broke up the comparatively small garrison of the French, drove them out of Rome, and proclaimed himself commandant; subject, however, to the orders of Naselli, who had meanwhile joined him with the bulk of the Neapolitan army. But this triumphant state of things did not last very long. The French, being reinforced, returned to Rome, and, to the indelible disgrace of the Neapolitan troops, reconquered the city almost without firing a shot.

Eighty thousand men fled before six thousand. The unfortunate Valentini, abandoned by all, found no refuge save in the faithful friendship of the Belli family, in whose house he remained concealed for a time. But as it was manifestly impossible to continue in safe hiding, he opened negotiations with a French general, to whom, in the first victory of the Neapolitans, he had generously accorded life and liberty. From this officer he obtained without difficulty a passport authorising him to return safe and unmolested to Naples. But scarcely had he got outside the Porta San Giovanni, when he was taken, and, contrary to all faith and the rights of nations, was dragged back to Rome and shot the next day on the Piazza of Monte Citorio. The unfortunate man met his death bravely, refusing to have his eyes bandaged, and keeping a steady front to the last.

Such is Belli's account of the matter, which differs from other narrations. For instance, in the "Annali d'Italia" (Coppi's continuation of "Muratori") Valentini is spoken of as "a certain Gennaro Valentino, without the title of General, a Neapolitan emissary who assumed the title of commissary and went through the streets waving the Neapolitan flag

and followed by a crowd of the populace and a few detachments of the National Guard." We are not concerned here to sift the truth of Valentini's story. What is important for our present purpose is to know that this traitorous butchery—the details of which Belli must naturally have learned from hearing them discussed by his family, since, at the time of its occurrence, he was but seven years old—made an ineffaceable impression on our poet, and fixed in his mind a shrinking horror of political liberalism under whatsoever form. At the same time, it is noteworthy that his natural benevolence, good sense, and hatred of injustice, were in permanent revolt against the priestly tyranny which oppressed the Papal States during his lifetime. Yet, while vaguely yearning after some distant ideal of good government, he mistrusted and despised all the concrete forms of Jacobinism. It was a case of *non possum tecum vivere, nec sine te.* Political acuteness, strongly defined opinions, and largeness of view, did not belong to Belli. But he possessed a deep fund of sympathy with the immediate and tangible troubles of the poor, together with all the concomitant antipathies which belong to that sentiment. And for the fulfilling of his peculiar—almost, we may say, unique

—literary vocation, these stood him in better stead than higher intellectual qualities might have done.

After a series of misfortunes resulting entirely from the part they had taken in the Valentini affair, a brief season of unclouded prosperity rose on the Bellis. The Republic fell, and Pius VII., created Pope at Venice, came to Rome to take possession of his states. Queen Caroline of Naples, mindful of the sufferings of the Belli family in the "holy cause," obtained by her influence with the Pope a lucrative post in the docks at Civita Vecchia for Gaudenzio Belli, the father of the poet. The Bellis kept open house not only at Civita Vecchia, but in Rome, where they passed six months of each year. There was nothing but feasting and rejoicing. The family were speedily surrounded by a needy and greedy horde of flatterers, who literally lived upon them in a fashion which curiously recalls the parasites of classic times. Young Giuseppe looked with disgust upon all this, and would steal out alone to sit in solitude on the sea-shore, and nurse the natural melancholy of his disposition. For our poet, like many other humourists by profession, had a large fund of sadness in his nature, and in later life he became almost hypochondriacal.

In 1803 a malignant epidemic broke out amongst the convicts in the galleys at Civita Vecchia, and Gaudenzio Belli, together with an intimate friend of his, busied himself in the midst of the unfortunate wretches, partly in the fulfilment of the duties of his office, and partly from a benevolent desire to alleviate their sufferings. Both Gaudenzio and his friend took the infection, and died after eighteen days' suffering. The affairs of the family were left in complete disorder. When Gaudenzio's papers came to be examined, many debts on his part appeared clear and indubitable, but of sums known to have been owing to him there was little or no trace. In the days immediately succeeding Gaudenzio's death, when his widow was delirious and his children were too young to bear any authority, two of the "parasites" had obtained possession of the dead man's keys, and got leave to examine into his papers. They made an inventory and departed, and thenceforth they entirely disappear from the story of Belli's life. The utterly informal nature of their proceedings, and the limitless opportunities for fraud quietly permitted to these persons, strike one as very strange. However, thus Belli briefly narrates the circumstances: When, two months after the father's death, the family finally

removed to Rome, the widow revealed to her children that scarcely anything remained to them. By the sale of the contents of the two houses in Rome and Civita Vecchia, a small sum, very inadequate for their needs, was realised. The Signora Belli was an accomplished needlewoman, and she set about endeavouring to support her three children, of whom Giuseppe was the eldest, by the work of her hands. Giuseppe was at this time about twelve years old. When he was thirteen his mother sent him to school at the Collegio Romano, at that time held by priests, as, indeed, were almost all educational establishments throughout the Papal States. Here Giuseppe, who had a great thirst for knowledge and a somewhat excessive *amour-propre*, at first excited the envy of his comrades and the approval of his masters by the rapid progress he made. But he was neither docile nor amiable, and especially he revolted against the severe corporal punishments which were unsparingly administered by his clerical preceptors. Once, being condemned to several strokes with the rod for an offence which he had not committed, he utterly rebelled, and left the school, vowing that he would never set foot in it more. But the prayers of his mother, and (perhaps still more efficaciously) the

explanations and *quasi* apology of his master, prevailed over this boyish resolution. He returned to the school, and, being thenceforward treated humanely, became "as gentle as a lamb."

But some new misfortunes came upon him. His mother died when he was but sixteen, and he and his brother and sister, being left quite destitute, were received into the house of a paternal uncle who was in easy circumstances. But before long the uncle's wife became jealous on behalf of her own children, and the three orphans were removed to the house of an aunt, who maintained them. Here Belli suffered agonies of wounded pride, and complains bitterly of the hard and grudging way in which the family charities were doled out to him, whilst, at the same time, he was expected by all his acquaintance to express the profoundest gratitude for the kindness of his relatives. After awhile his uncle procured a place with a small stipend for him in the accountant's office of Casa Rospigliosi, and with this sum, together with a little assistance from Archbishop, afterwards Cardinal, Anton Maria Odescalchi, who was his godfather, Giuseppe soon contrived to maintain himself entirely. At this period of his life he fell into somewhat dissolute company, became a haunter of billiard-rooms,

taverns, and theatres, and injured his health by excesses of various kinds. He passed by degrees from one post to another, always subject to painful vicissitudes and intimately acquainted with poverty, until, by the influence of a friend (Filippo Ricci), to whom he was sincerely attached all his life, he obtained the position of secretary to Prince Stanislas Poniatowski, and found himself at once in the midst of abundance and luxury. But his character was ill adapted to the life he found himself expected to lead in the Prince's household. He was averse by nature to forms and ceremonies, accustomed among his companions to give free vent to the satiric spirit which predominated in his mind, and unable to witness abuses without denouncing them. He left Poniatowski's service, but under what circumstances is not accurately known. Certainly, he quitted it with a heart full of indignation and bitterness, which he vented in several poems written about this period, inveighing against the corruptions of "courts." Once more he was at odds with fortune, and without a home—almost without food. His uncle, however, invited him to his table, and, by means of Father Lodovico Micara (afterwards Cardinal), procured a free lodging for him in the Capuchin Monastery.

Here Belli passed some time studiously and peacefully. He began to study English, and gave some attention to physical science. About this period he began to be known as a literary aspirant through the only channel then open to literature in Rome—the Academies. He became a member of an *accademia* called The Hellenes; and, in 1813, he, with one or two friends, founded the *Accademia Tiberina*, which survives to this day. Signor Gnoli, from whose excellent article in the *Nuova Antologia* I have derived most of the facts of Belli's biography, has some admirable remarks on "academies" in general, and their special influence on the poet we are now considering. "One must," says Gnoli, "have familiarly frequented these academies for several years, as I did, in order to form an idea of that world outside the world—as full of littleness as a convent of nuns—to understand how the enforced idleness of the mind, and the absence of all vital ideas, can give an appearance of grave interest to the most ridiculous trifles; to explain, in a word, all the narrowness, silliness, and pedantry to be found among the writings of that very Giuseppe Belli who, having one fine day broken out of this shell and mingled with the people, was able to give forth rays of real genius."

At length, in 1816, when Belli was twenty-five years old, fortune took pity on him, and released him from the material privations and the wearing struggle with poverty which had hitherto hindered the development of his real literary gift. A rich and agreeable widow, the Countess Maria Pichi, born Conti, made his acquaintance in the house of her parents, with whom she lived. From admiration of his talents and pity for his misfortunes, the way was not long to a warm attachment. The lady offered him her hand. Belli at first refused, fearing to be accused of mercenary motives, and feeling sure that the lady's family would disapprove such an alliance. But the Countess, in order to remove his scruples on the first score, obtained for him by means of her intimate friend, the Princess of Piombino, a mediocre appointment in the Papal Stamp and Registry Office. This sufficed to overcome Belli's not very firm resistance, and the marriage took place, and was judged—as the world judges such marriages. All Rome was scandalised, and declared that Belli had sold himself. It was true that the lady was rich and well connected, whilst the gentleman was poor and unknown. Worse than this, the wife was some ten years the elder. But, nevertheless, to the surprise and disappointment of a discerning public, the marriage turned out perfectly

well! From the day of his wedding a new and tranquil existence began for our poet. In some lines addressed to his wife he says :

> . . . . dal dì ch' io vivo teco
> Vivo, o mia vita, d' una vita nuova.

And it was not only a new life, but one thoroughly congenial to his character, and favourable to the development of his rare and peculiar poetic faculty. A little daughter was born to him within the first year of his marriage, but died in infancy. Several years later, however, in 1824, he was made supremely happy by the birth of a son, named Ciro, who survived him, and whom he idolised to the end of his days.

It was not until the year 1827 that Belli began that species of writing on which his fame exclusively rests. The first suggestion of it appears to have come from the poems, in the Milanese dialect, of Carlo Porta, which he read for the first time in this year. But although these may have suggested to Belli the idea that it was possible and profitable to write in dialect, yet he has no essential debt to Porta, nor to any other poet, as far as the form and spirit of his sonnets are concerned. They are original, as all works of art must be original which are founded on the patient study of nature at first hand. Not

all Belli's sonnets are yet published. Nevertheless, the edition of his poems brought out by his son, Ciro Belli, in 1865, contains eight hundred of them! They furnish a complete and lively image of the Roman populace, as has been said. And this is what Belli himself declares he intended they should do. The great majority of them are utterly untranslatable into verse; and even a literal prose version would fail to give an idea of the original in most cases. The orthography adopted by Belli represents with wonderful accuracy the genuine Roman pronunciation of the lower classes; but it makes the reading of the sonnets difficult to those whose ear is not familiar with the *dialetto romanesco.* Belli is of opinion that the Roman *plebs* is essentially unpoetic, as is also Signor Gnoli. And, strengthened by such undoubted testimony, I may venture to say that, so far as my own observation goes, it entirely confirms this view. Their vernacular is hard, narrow, and lacks the poetical forms in which other dialects of the peninsula are so rich. Their vocabulary is singularly limited by their almost incredible ignorance. Their idiosyncrasy is practical, self-sufficient, satirical —anything on earth rather than poetical! They have a very considerable power of satire; not the

keen, envenomed sneer of the quick-witted Florentine, but a strong ruthless thrust that strikes home and spares not. And it is these traits which Belli has faithfully reproduced for us, without exaggeration or mitigation.

It is curious to find from the pen of a man who was always looked on as a good son of the Church, and who has written a considerable quantity of religious poetry, such tremendous hits against priests and Pope, and religion itself, as are to be found in Belli's sonnets. But there are two reasons, as it seems to me, for this fact. The first is, that it would have been impossible to give a complete picture of the mind of the Roman populace without recording the utter irreverence and incredulity which are mingled with their grossest superstitions, as warp is with woof; the second reason is that singular duality which we remark throughout Belli's literary career. There are two men in him: one, the product of his education and the priestly influence which entered into all men's lives in the Rome of that day with a penetrating subtlety not to be evaded—a pedantic, periwig-pated person fed on the husks of academic poetry, and theories of good government approved by the Curia Romana; the other, a man of quick sympathies and

sensibilities, animated to pity and indignation by close contact with the neglected and perverted populace, possessing a terribly searching insight into fact, and, withal, a distinct strain of real genius which is not to be hoodwinked by any muffling theories of expediency. The latter man it was who wrote the sonnets in *dialetto romanesco.* Signor Gnoli is distinctly of opinion that Belli was, at the bottom of his heart, a rationalist—a Voltairean, as he would have been, and was, called in his day. And, certainly, it appears incredible that a faithful son of Mother Church should have given utterance to some of the sonnets on religious subjects. It is not from isolated irreverent phrases that Belli's incredulity can be argued, since these have, as has been said, a perfect dramatic propriety in the mouth of a *Trasteverino,* who may at the same time be the devoutest of bigots. But when the whole series of sonnets touching on biblical or sacred subjects is taken together, it forms a mass of bitter sarcasm which Voltaire himself has never surpassed on the same theme. Especially is our poet terrible when he undertakes, in the person of a devout *popolano,* to defend a dogma difficult of digestion, or to explain some theological contradiction in terms. In this connection the sonnets entitled "Er Paradiso,"

and "Li du' Testamenti"—controversial dialogues between a Jew and a Christian—are especially noteworthy. But these, and, indeed, nearly all the sonnets on similar subjects, could hardly be reproduced in these pages. I have selected one of the least objectionable for translation, partly because it contains one or two profound traits of the thoroughbred *popolano*, ever proudly conscious, in the midst of poverty, neglect, and ignorance, that he is a *civis romanus*, and, as such, superior to the rest of mankind.

The sonnet is entitled "Cain."

I'm not defending Cain, good sir, not I!
I know as well as you do, who was Cain;
I only say, for instance, and maintain,
That drink will sometimes blind both heart and eye.
Of course I know that fiercely to let fly
A whack upon your little brother's brain
Is a foul bumpkin's trick.* That's very plain.
Cain took a mean advantage, certainly;
But then, to see *your* offering every day,
Apples or turnips, spat on, so to speak,
Whilst the Lord smiled on Abel's kids and whey—
A man of flesh and blood can't be so meek
But *that* must make his gall rise, I should say,
Hit out a good 'un! Human nature's weak.

* In the original "una bbonagrazia da bburrino." "Burrino" signifies a peasant of the Romagna, and the genuine Roman citizen looks on him with profound disdain.

Here is another about Purgatory:

Well, I can't understand it, I declare,
How certain fools can fancy in their folly
That purgatory isn't true; and dare
An article of Faith to scoff at wholly.
What are those fires, then, where, a-roasting slowly,
The blessed souls, confound ye, painted fair
Upon the chapel-walls in pictures holy,
Sit in the flames as real as they can stare?
If purgatory was a humbug, pray
Would our priest-governors so just and wise
Have had it painted up in church that way?
A sham! Is hell a sham too? Oh, my eyes,
I wish it was, though! What good news, friend, eh?
Better than winning the big lottery prize!

There is a very absurd sonnet called, "The Flight into Egypt," in which the angel, appearing to Joseph in a dream, carries an almanack under his arm, and, pointing to December 28th (Massacre of the Innocents), demands of the saint *whether he remembers what festa is celebrated on that date!* But, grotesque as this idea seems, I have no doubt that it was, or might have been, derived from the actual utterances of some *popolano.*

Here is an appalling picture of the desolation and lawlessness of the Roman Campagna in the year of

grace 1836. The speaker is probably a lad sent out to gather *canne*—the tall reeds which in Rome are dried and extensively used, amongst other purposes, for lighting fires. The reeds were growing in a solitary pasture; and here is the account of the journey. Belli entitles the sonnet significantly, "Er Deserto"—"The Desert."

Nay, God forbid, saints, and Madonna mine,
That I should go there to fetch reeds again!
Rather at the Rotunda* I'd be fain
To let the butcher stick me like a swine,
To go ten miles without a blessed sign
Of tree or leaf in all the dreary plain!
And such a stillness! When with might and main
I shouted, not a voice to answer mine!
Wherever you may turn, the pastures lie
Smooth as a board that's partly planed away.
No trace of house or dwelling can you spy.
The only thing I met with as I sped
Was just a cart left standing in the way,
And under it the carter, murder'd dead!

In the following sonnet, which he calls "L'Innustria"—Industry—Belli shows up a branch of

* The Pantheon is called in the Roman vernacular *la Ritonna*, or "the Rotunda." In its immediate neighbourhood there are many pork-butchers' shops.

Roman commerce by no means altogether extinct in the present day.

> One day I found myself without a rap,
> Without one blessed farthing upon earth.
> So what d'ye think I did? Ran to the hearth
> And broke the shovel in four pieces, slap!
> Beneath my jacket carefully I wrap
> The bits; and set off for the Forum straight,
> Meaning for some *milordo** there to wait
> And do him neatly, if I had good hap.
> The very chap I wanted soon was found.
> "Sir, look at this old ancient thing," says I,
> "Took from the excavations underground."
> With that, he sticks his glass into his eye,
> Tips me a crown, cries, "Bravo!" I'll be bound
> We Romans can pluck pigeons when we try!

It would of course be impossible within our limits even to indicate the subjects of all the immense mass of Belli's sonnets. They deal with all scenes and circumstances of Roman popular life. They show the people in their ignorance, pride, shrewdness, simplicity, ferocity, and generosity. The Roman loves good eating and drinking, and at certain festive seasons will have them at the cost of much subsequent privation.

* "My lord." Generic for Englishmen with more money than wit, in the opinion of the Roman *plebs*.

He has his share of the inertness which seems to belong to the inhabitants of all southern climates, yet he is robust and vigorous, and can, and often does, labour hard. He is naturally and unaffectedly dignified in his demeanour; and it is a remarkable fact that not all the centuries of absolute rule and priestly preaching of submissiveness as a virtue have availed to make him servile. He habitually stands upright and looks you in the face. Nevertheless—or perhaps I should rather say "therefore"—he is instantly responsive to courtesy. You need never fear, in intercourse with the Roman populace, that affability will render them obtrusively familiar. Systematically neglected and perverted as the *popolano* has been for generations, grotesquely ignorant, and grotesquely vain-glorious of the dimly-understood traditions of antique Roman greatness, careless of human life, and implacable in his thirst for vengeance, there is yet a sound core in the heart of him. He is naturally manly and intelligent, And his intelligence runs in practical and positive directions. His humour is of a somewhat sardonic kind, but he *has* humour—as Belli can witness for us. He can bear poverty—grinding poverty—with a certain stoicism; and if he does complain, it is rather with a curse than a whine.

Those readers who can conquer the difficulty of the phonetic orthography—very puzzling to a foreign eye at first—and will not be repelled by certain grossnesses of phraseology, which are the perhaps too faithful reproduction of the habitual speech of the people, may be recommended to Belli's sonnets in *dialetto romanesco* as to a storehouse of curious and interesting matter; and they will make acquaintance with a poet who, if his kind be not the first, is at least first, if not unique, of his kind.

Here are, in conclusion, a few specimens of the more comic sonnets translated literally (or as nearly literally as the proprieties will permit) into English prose.

EVIL OMENS.

"That's all fiddlesticks! Why, you don't understand one tittle about these matters. Look here, do you really want to know why Lucia the landlady had all her three cats stolen? Why two of her sons are crazy? Why she lost her wager with Checco? Why the lawyers, on some trumpery excuse or other, have eaten up her bit of property? Why her husband the landlord died? Why that other tavern kept by Pasquale has taken away all her customers? Because, last Carnival twelvemonth, when she was dressing

salad and eggs, she overset the oil and spilt the salt!"

Another example of popular superstition :

PINS.

"If you give a pin to anyone you're fond of, you lose their good will in a few days. Their blood all turns against you in their veins, and who knows when it may come right again? If they're two sweethearts, they begin to quarrel. If they're man and wife, they begin to do worse! Within a month I've seen five or six scenes of this sort in our neighbourhood. In case you want a pin to fasten something in your hair or your breast, Signora Camilla, and can't do without it, just you give a prick with the very same pin to the hand that offers it to you, to destroy the venom!"

A popular view of the Coliseum :

THE COLISEUM.

"This was for joustings and fireworks, like they have now at the Corea.* All round here were the private boxes, the gallery up above, and the pit in the middle.

* The site of the Mausoleum of Augustus, where there is an open-air theatre much frequented by the populace in summer.

And then, Mastro Andrea can tell you all about the office where they sold the keys and tickets, the *caffè* where you got ices and lemonade, and all the staircases and passages and trap-doors. As to the *viacrusce* (via crucis), they made that afterwards because of the holy martyrs who so often suffered here. Just patch it up here and there with a few stones, and a little lime and plaster, and a coat of whitewash, and it might be used to this day!"

Here is an anxious housewife reciting her evening rosary in the midst of a somewhat unruly family, it appears, who are supposed to be sewing or working in various ways around her. The spelling exactly represents, to an Italian, the extraordinary transformations which the Latin prayers undergo in the mouths of the populace:

FAMILY PRAYERS.

"*Avemmaria*—work—*grazzia prena*—Nena, will you work?—*dominu steco*—Ouf!—*bbenedetta tu mujjeri*—Nena!—*e bbenedetto er frù*—you'll catch it!—*Fruttu sventr' e ttu Jesso, san*—what a worry!—*ta Maria madre ddei*—do you repeat after me? *Ora pre nobbi*—only wait till supper-time!—*peccatori*—Laws ha mercy, what kind of a muddle have you got vour

work into, you awkward thing? Let me see, where was I? Oh, I know: *nunche tinora morti nostri ammenne. Grolia padre*—what now? You little demon; you hussey! There! The rosary's finished. We'll say the rest another evening."

Here is an incident of official supervision in Papal times. The inspecting doctor makes his rounds and visits the druggists in his district:

THE DRUGGIST'S SHOP.

"Last year my master the druggist got a notice from the *Protomedico* (Physician-in-Chief) that he was coming to take him by surprise on the first Monday in Carnival. Then my master, who is an orderly kind of man, had two or three bottles filled with rice-water, and made me rinse my face, and the jars, and the mortar. On the Monday sure enough comes the doctor. 'Everything as it ought to be here?' 'Everything,' answered the druggist. 'And here is your little *douceur*.' 'Bravo! That's how I like to see things done.' With that he takes the fee, weighs it in his hand, and pockets it."

The number of these specimens might be indefinitely extended, and would give us a view of almost every conceivable phase of Roman life.

Lesage's "Diable Boiteux" did not make the Spanish student more intimately acquainted with Sevillian interiors than Belli makes his readers with the Rome of his day. And be it observed that the pictures he presents are drawn by no fanatical opponent of the Papal *régime.* They are simply the result of an extraordinary power of accurate observation, and a gift of realistic portraiture unsurpassed in the history of letters.

THE END.

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